



Zenith Learning

Parent Handbook
2019-2020

MISSION

Dedicated to providing high quality school-age programs and substitute solutions to ensure peace of mind for customers

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- After-school programs enhance education while building essential social and emotional skills through working with peers
- Quality personnel can meet the needs of a client and provide peace of mind for continued excellence in day-to-day work
- Staff members look beyond the present to inspire others
- We partner with schools to ensure every day is a success

WELCOME

We are excited you chose Zenith Learning for your child's outside-of-school time experience. We love what we do and hope it shows every day of programming. Zenith Learning works with the school to enhance the child's academic day. While we are not actually part of the academic program, our curriculum reflects the regular lessons and reinforces concepts.

In addition, we work hard to incorporate social/emotional, leadership and communication skills. In partnership with the campus, we believe a child has a well-rounded education and is better prepared for a successful future.

At any time, if you have questions about our program, we encourage you to talk with the Site Director on site or call the main office at 713-988-9600.

Each Zenith Learning location has specific email addresses for the Site Director and/or Clerk. Emails can be sent at any time. Please know for emergencies, you may also contact the main office at 713-988-9600 and office staff can reach out to the programs.

Main Office, Zenith Learning
713-988-9600 ● info@zenithlearning.org
10300 Westoffice Drive, Suite 106
Houston, Texas 77042

OVERVIEW OF AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

Zenith Learning's after school program is fee-based and located at various school campuses throughout Texas. The after school program begins immediately when the school day ends and runs until 6:00 p.m. (or at 6:30 p.m. at specific locations). Students remain on site, as no field trips are offered during the school year.

After attendance is taken, the program begins with a provided snack and drink. Students are asked to go to the bathroom prior to snack, in order to wash their hands. Snack continues until Academic Time begins.

Academic Time is up to one hour of educational enhancement. During Academic Time, students who have homework are encouraged and supported in completing assignments. There is no guarantee of homework completion, but staff members do make this a daily goal. Students without homework participate in educational activities (i.e. reading books, journal writing, educational games, workbooks, computer projects, and related activities).

After Academic Time, children rotate in groups divided by age/grade through a variety of activities. Topics (and examples) for these activities include:

- Celebrations (recognized days of fun, creative and exciting national celebrations)
- Leadership (civics, communication, making decisions, problem solving, goal setting, helping others, working together, etc.)
- Recreational Games (gym games, team sports, social games, etc.)
- Healthful Living (exercise, nutrition, positive thinking, self-esteem, teamwork, etc.)
- Arts & Culture (painting, world cultures/traditions, crafts, dance, celebrations, etc.)
- Science & Math (number games, animals, experiments, charts/graphs, etc.)
- Literacy (poetry, journals, story telling, puppets, alphabet pictures, letters, brainstorming, etc.)
- Academic Extras (academic enhancing activities to keep the brains working)
- Kids Pick is a time in which the staff members post a choice of activities and allow the children to choose what they would like to play.

Our secondary school programs may include additional activities such as:

Tech Projects - students will focus on technology through hands on activities. Utilizing computers students will develop skills to enhance learning.

Rec It Up - time spent conducting sports activities. Examples include: basketball, soccer, target net volleyball, team building games and much more.

Study Skills - sessions will be held to improve test taking skills, organization, time management, note taking strategies, listening skills and other related topics.

Science This! - students will participate in a variety of science games, projects, demonstrations and experiments.

Music City - students will take part in activities related to music.

Teen Choice - a time students are allowed to choose their own activities and plan future projects.

Team Building/Leadership Activities - students are engaged in that foster community among peers.

Arts and Cultural – students participate in activities related to the arts and learn about various cultures.

All activities, elementary or secondary, have an educational objective, masked within a hands-on activity or game. We strive to create an environment where children can apply concepts learned in school and practice skills, while having fun at the same time. Many of our activities focus around social skills and learning to work with others. At any time, parents may ask staff members to view activity plans. Children are never forced to participate in all activities, as Zenith Learning has a “right to pass” guideline. Staff members will encourage children to participate and are trained to implement each activity in a positive, engaging manner.

A **sample** schedule is included below, although each site will adapt the rotation of activities to accommodate for the ages/developmental levels of children. Activities will also rotate from active to non-active, as children respond to the time of day. In order to obtain a realistic view of the program, parents are encouraged to visit at different times. Picking up your child at the end of the program may only allow parents to see end of the program activities, which may include some free time or gym games, as activity plans are completed and attendance becomes less.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
3:00 – 3:30	Greeting* and Snack Time/Attendance Verified				
3:30 – 4:15	Homework and Academic Extras (see activity plans)				
4:15 – 5:00 Rotation 1	Area – gym Giants, Wizards and Dwarfs	Area – library Tough Spot	Area – outside True or False	Area – café Line Art Leaves	Area – main hall Quick Switch Chasey
5:00 – 5:45 Rotation 2	Area – café Zentangled Web	Area – café Touch Blue	Area – library Flower card	Area – gym Meteor Shower Ball	Area – gym Steal the Bacon
5:45 – 6:00	Mini-games				

Students are encouraged **not** to bring personal games, electronic devices, toys, etc. to Zenith Learning, as staff members will not be responsible for lost or stolen items. Students will have designated space to keep belongings, but they are not able to keep items locked.

In the event a personal item becomes a distraction to the program or to other children, staff members may take the item and return it to the parent upon pick-up.

Parents are encouraged to visit the program at any time, although they must enter through the main office and sign-in as a visitor.

Early Release Days

Zenith Learning is open during all regular school days and will follow the assigned school calendar, including early release days if any. Care for these days is included in your tuition payment. If your child will be absent from Zenith Learning on early release days, it is imperative that you inform the site staff in advance to avoid unnecessary concern. Site staff will include special activities for these days and a regular snack is provided.

Staffing

Zenith Learning maintains a 1:16 ratio of staff to children in the program. The Site Director is included in this ratio, except for sites with enrollment numbers over forty-five. As a program grows in enrollment numbers, or lowers in enrollment numbers – staff may increase in number or decrease to maintain the ratio. While consistency is important to us, we recognize that staff changes may occur throughout the year.

Each program is staffed with a Site Director (our larger programs may, at times, have Assistant Site Directors). The Site Director is your main point of contact and oversees the program and staff on site.

Group Leaders work directly with the small groups of children and implement activities.

Sites with over forty-five students will have a Clerk, who remains in the front office to “buzz” in parents, check daily attendance, inform parents of account issues, and verify identification of persons picking up children. The Clerk will keep track of enrollment on site.

Zenith Learning employs Support Staff members who fill in for all positions within the program. As they become familiar with each site, they may ask to check identification when substituting as a Clerk, even though the regular staff may know you. Please be patient, as it is for your child’s safety that we maintain strict security policies at all times.

All staff members receive a criminal background check and initial Zenith Learning orientation, along with program training upon being hired. This training may include, but is not limited to, policies/ procedures, communication with children, activity implementation, behavior management, overview of special needs, supervision of children, developmental stages of children, reporting child abuse/neglect, and confidentiality of records.

Zenith Learning strives to hire a diverse staff and encourage parents to get to know the personnel working at your child’s program. Customer service is important, as we know you have a choice in after-school care. **Zenith Learning does not plan on staff changes, although we do recognize that changes may be made at any time to either accommodate the program, and/or adjust for staff resignations/hirings.**

Behavior & Guidance

Zenith Learning Guidelines for Behavior include:

- ➔ Make good choices.
- ➔ Try your best.
- ➔ Be considerate and respectful.
- ➔ Stay in control.
- ➔ Have a positive purpose.

Program staff members are trained in positive strategies for preventing and managing inappropriate behavior. In addition, staff members are trained to communicate with parents/ guardians regarding behavior through verbal/electronic communication, brief notes or incident reports.

Incident Reports are longer forms utilized to document a more severe incident related to a specific child. Staff members are also encouraged to talk with parents on a regular basis, as we recognize that parents know their children best.

Should a concern arise regarding a child's behavior/needs, parents will be contacted to discuss/review the situation. Staff will utilize a variety of appropriate interventions to address the inappropriate behavior.

If inappropriate behavior should continue, or if a child's behavior becomes unsafe for him/her self or others, he/she may be suspended temporarily or permanently from membership. **Fighting of any type will result in suspension.**

In the event a parent is contacted to come and pick up his/her child due to behavioral concerns, the parent must make arrangements to come to the program as soon as possible, as we do not have "in-school suspension" areas or enough staff to provide a one-on-one ratio.

Temporary suspension may be from 1 to 3 days of the regular program. When a child is suspended, parents will be contacted to pick the child up from the program. A child who is suspended from Zenith Learning may not come to the program on the days he/she is suspended and parents must make other arrangements for after-school care. Zenith Learning does not have any type of "in-school suspension" available. Refunds will not be given for days missed due to suspension.

A meeting with the Zenith Learning administrator will be held to determine permanent suspension. In addition, if a child's needs are greater than can be met in a staff to child ratio of 1:16, Zenith Learning may not be a suitable option for care.

Any situations that occur regarding behavior during Zenith Learning are separate from the academic day and are handled with Zenith Learning procedures and guidelines. Campus administrators may be notified should a child's behavior lead to permanent suspension or is defined as a violation of the school code of conduct. Zenith Learning utilizes school resource officers and/or local police/constables in the event a law is broken during program hours.

Zenith Learning staff members (like school staff members) are not permitted to discuss children, other than your own, with you in regards to behavior or any other aspect of the Zenith Learning program – just as our staff members are not permitted to discuss your child with other parents/ guardians of children in the program. Please note that policies and procedures are consistent for all children enrolled in Zenith Learning.

Personal Belongings

Children's personal belongings (i.e. backpacks, books, coats, etc.) must be cleared from the program area after each day. Any personal property which remains will be taken to the school's lost and found box. Although Zenith Learning staff members attempt to help children stay organized, the program cannot be responsible for lost personal property. Children are discouraged from bringing personal toys, money, or other items not necessary for school activities to Zenith Learning. In the event a child's personal items become a distraction to others or the program, they can be taken by staff members and stored until parents arrive to claim them.

Dress Code

Children are expected to continue with the school dress code in Zenith Learning. In addition, they must wear shoes during our program. In the event your child is wearing sandals, crocs or other shoes that are not deemed safe for gym games, your child will be asked to sit out. Also, children may not participate in gym in time in bare feet.

Attendance

If your child will not be attending Zenith Learning because of a scheduled appointment, vacation or other planned absence, please notify staff members well in advance. If your child is ill, or being picked up early from school, please email the Site Director/Clerk or request that the school inform Zenith Learning to avoid confusion in attendance.

Absences without prior notification may be mistaken for a missing child, and cause unnecessary concern and time searching for the child. If a child does not arrive at the program as intended, Zenith Learning staff members will utilize the following procedures: 1) check with school office staff/ teacher for absence 2) contact the parent using the numbers listed on the enrollment form 3) contact emergency numbers listed on the enrollment form 4) contact the local police department if the child is deemed “missing” from Zenith Learning (*an administrator may be involved at this level).

Since Zenith Learning is open later in the evening than regular school; we do not allow children to walk home from our program. Should a parent request that a child be checked out of Zenith Learning by a minor/sibling, he/she will be asked to complete a special permission slip. Although it is not recommended by Zenith Learning staff for a child to be picked up by a sibling who is a minor, we recognize this may be the only option for parents.

In the event a child is participating in an after-school club or other activity by a separate organization (not related to the campus), the parent must provide written permission indicating the person/driver’s license whom will be responsible for signing out/in the child. Examples may include, but are not limited to, scouting, sports, dance, music, etc.

It is imperative that a parent inform the Site Director/Clerk if your child participates in other programs that are at the school and part of the campus (i.e. tutoring, clubs, talent shows, band rehearsals, etc.). We do not want your child to be mistaken for a missing child and cause unnecessary concern and time searching for your child.

Failure to comply with attendance guidelines may result in termination of your child’s enrollment in Zenith Learning.

Child Health

Zenith Learning recognizes that a child’s health/ immunization information is kept current at the school and it is not necessary to duplicate these records. Although, parents are asked to include allergies, special diets, and/or emergency health information on our enrollment online.

Parents may be called in the event a child becomes sick and is not able to participate in our regularly scheduled activities. A child who becomes ill will be separated and the parent will be contacted immediately to come for him/her. **For the protection of all**

children in our program, your child must be “symptom free” for 24 hours before returning to the program:

- Intestinal disturbance accompanied by diarrhea or vomiting
- Temperature of 100.4 or greater
- Any undiagnosed rash
- Discharge from the eyes/ears or profuse nasal discharge
- Symptoms of possible communicable disease (such as sniffles, red eyes, sore throat, headache and abdominal pain with fever)

Due to budgetary, staffing and programmatic restrictions, Zenith Learning does not maintain a school nurse or other health professional on staff. Regular/on-going medication will not be administered on site and arrangements with the school nurse must be made. Temporary medications for specific health conditions (i.e. asthma) will only be administered on an emergency basis.

Parents with students who have medications must complete an “Authorization for Dispensing Medication Form”. All medications administered at Zenith Learning must be brought in the original container with a medication administration form completed to the Site Director. Forms for medication administration may be obtained from a Site Director.

Zenith Learning has a no tolerance policy regarding possession of medication of any kind at any time (prescription or non-prescription). Children may not keep medications in their possession without a doctor’s written permission turned in advance to the Zenith Learning staff members with an authorization form.

Zenith Learning staff members are NOT allowed access to the medication administered at school. In the event a child takes medicine at school and the same medicine needs to be taken at the program, the parent will have to provide a separate supply of medicine for Zenith Learning in an original container.

With safety as a major priority, we recognize that at times children will get minor scrapes, bruises, etc. during our program. To address this issue, each site is equipped with first aid supplies. Staff utilize Ouch Reports, which are short forms used to communicate information regarding minor injuries to parents, how it was handled and the care your child received. All staff members are trained in handling minor emergencies, but are not necessarily certified in first-aid care. Site Directors will be trained in CPR/ First Aid/ Defibrillator use.

In the event that a child receives an injury to the head, eyes or ears, parents will be contacted immediately to notify them of the situation. Should the child experience any changes in behavior, signs of dizziness, headaches, nausea, staggering, bleeding from the eyes/ ears, difficulty breathing, vomiting or similar, we will call 911.

In the event a child soils his/her clothes, parents/ guardians will be contacted to come and pick up the child immediately. Parents are encouraged to send an extra set of clothes in the child’s backpack to provide them with a change. Zenith Learning does not keep extra clothes on site.

All Zenith Learning staff members are trained in recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect. This reporting is required by law should the staff member have cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse, neglect, or is a victim of indecency with a child by any person. The call is typically made immediately, but must be made no later than 48 hours after the hour the staff member first suspects that the child has been or may be abused or neglected, or is a victim of indecency with a child. Zenith Learning staff members may not delegate to or rely on another person to make the report. The report is made to the Child Protective Services Hotline.

Enrollment/ Child Pick-Up

Zenith Learning does not discriminate against applicants on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, or disability status. However, due to staffing, budgetary, and programmatic restrictions, and because Zenith Learning is not a part of the campus academic program, certain restrictions apply for enrollment and each child's application will be reviewed individually for acceptance.

Enrollment forms are collected online at the Zenith Learning website. Enrollment cannot be completed on site and/or at the child's school. It is the responsibility of the enrolling parent to update the form should any changes occur in phone/work/or other information.

The parent who enrolls the child in Zenith Learning, and manages the enrollment, has the right to list who can and cannot pick up the child from the program. In the case of shared custody or visitation rights, we must have a copy of the court order documenting the specific rights and responsibilities of each parent/guardian. Corrections or additions to our forms must be made in writing by the person who originally completed the form.

All persons allowed to pick up the child must be listed on the enrollment form, along with identification information – this includes parents. Staff members will not allow a child to leave with a person who is not listed. In the event a person not listed arrives to pick up a child, we will call the parent to discuss the situation.

Authorized persons may pick up children at any time once the program starts, using the main doors of the school. **All doors are secure and parents will need to knock or “buzz” in and must present picture identification (driver’s license or similar) in order to pick up their child. Authorized persons must sign the child out before leaving.**

If a parent or other authorized person arrives at Zenith Learning smelling of alcohol or exhibiting erratic behavior, staff members will not release the child to that person. Staff members are instructed to contact the local police/sheriff.

Tuition/ Fees/ Payments/ Receipts

The non-refundable registration fee is \$55 per child/\$80 per family.

Tuition is assessed per child, per month. Monthly tuition is due on the first of each month, regardless of when the first day of the month falls or the days in attendance.

There is not a part-time rate. Monthly fees reserve a space for the child regardless of the time actually spent in the program.

A late fee of \$40 will be assessed if monthly tuition is received on the 6th through or thereafter. Late fees apply regardless of when the first day of the month falls or the reason it is late. Site staff members do not have the authority to waive fees.

In the event tuition is not received by the 10th and the parent does not contact the main office, a child may be dropped from the program. Should a child be dropped, the parent will be contacted by phone and a letter will be e-mailed or given in person to notify the change in enrollment status.

At this time, the parent will have to make other arrangements for care or re-enroll their child in Zenith Learning and re-pay the registration fee.

Tuition is calculated based on a total for the school year and then **divided out by nine school months (September through May)**. **August tuition is prorated and there is no charge for any days, if any, for June. All months, September through May, will be charged at the same rate, regardless of the number of days within the school calendar.**

Special discounts are available for Zenith Learning employees, school staff members, siblings, veterans and may be available for students who qualify for free or reduced lunch based upon location.

Late pick up fees are applicable beginning after a four-minute grace period, based upon the school clock and parents will be charged \$1 per minute/per child. Parents are not required to pay the late pick-up fee at the time of late pick-up, as the charge will be added to the account. Program staff members will provide the parent/ guardian with a notice regarding the fee by the next program day. Program staff members do not have authority to waive the fee and the fee is charged regardless of the reason (e.g. weather, traffic, etc.). We recognize emergencies will occur and are thankful the staff members remain on site to care for your child. The fee charged does not cover the total cost in continuing care, but does help remedy the situation. Continued late pick-ups may result in termination of care for your child from Zenith Learning.

Notice of Dropping

In order to stop services from Zenith Learning, a parent must send an email to admin@zenithlearning.org and provide a ten business day notice. From the date of the email, tuition will be prorated for that month including the ten business day notice. If the tuition already paid is greater than the notice of withdraw and the prorated tuition, the difference will be refunded. If the parent initially paid a deposit, the deposit will be refunded minus any fees.

If a parent chooses to re-enroll in Zenith Learning after a drop, the registration fee is required again. If a parent withdraws from services and the account has a balance, information will be sent to a collection agency and re-enrollment is not possible until the balance is cleared.

Inclement Weather/ Emergencies

In the case of inclement weather and your child's campus closes, Zenith Learning will also be closed. If the weather begins to worsen throughout the day and road conditions are poor, we ask that you try to pick up your child up as soon as possible. This will allow our staff to also get home safely, before the conditions are not suitable for driving.

Staff members are trained in basic emergency procedures and follow the Zenith Guidelines for handling crisis. Monthly fire, shelter in place, lockdown and reverse evacuation drills are conducted at each site.

Should the electricity go out during the program, staff members are trained to move children into a lighted area and continue programming. Parents will only be called to pick up their child(ren) early, should the facilities be deemed unsafe.

Communication

Zenith Learning welcomes your feedback and input. All questions and concerns regarding Zenith Learning should be addressed with the Site Director at each program, or an administrator at the main office (713-988-9600). Please do not contact the campus staff or principal, as the program is chosen to operate by the school but managed separately from the school.

Zenith Learning is not a licensed day-care and has received exemption from the governance of Child-Care licensing. It is approved by the school district through an agreement; therefore, Zenith Learning is supervised by an entity that is governed by the regulations of the Texas Educational Agency.