



First Coast
Technical College
Your Future Comes First

Tech Tots
Child Care and Learning Center
Parent Handbook
2024-25

Teach. Learn. Grow.

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Lic.#C07SJ0040

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George Mastoridis
Director
First Coast Technical College
2980 Collins Avenue
St. Augustine, FL 32084

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Tech Tots Childcare and Learning Center. We are excited to work with you and your child to develop the foundation for your child’s future social, emotional and cognitive learning. We strive to offer a quality program that recognizes and values each child’s unique traits and potential. The curriculum is child-centered and reflects best practices as set forward in Teaching Strategies Gold, The Creative Curriculum for Preschool approved by Florida Department of Education. We look forward to a year of amazing growth for your child.

We adhere to all state, county and district rules regarding childcare licensing, fire, safety and nutrition. Our goal is to provide a safe, nurturing and healthy learning environment for all children in which to learn and develop.

This handbook is designed to acquaint you with our program policies and procedures. Please read and refer to this handbook as needed. Feel free to discuss any concerns or questions with our staff. The Tech Tots office is located on the main campus of First Coast Technical College in Building E, Room 202.

Sincerely,

Curemia Dailey

Curemia Dailey
Director/Operator

Learning Center staff and Director work together to develop, implement, manage and evaluate the Learning Center program.

Please contact the Learning Center Directors if you have any concerns.

Learning Center Director

The Learning Center Director oversees the operations of the Learning Center Program and communication with the teachers and staff. The Director assures adequate supplies, materials and equipment are available for the program. The Director will serve as a teacher as needed. She will also serve as the parent contact and supervise the Learning Center staff.

The Learning Center Director reports directly to the First Coast Technical College School Principal and Assistant Principal. The Director keeps the Principal and Assistant Principal informed of the Learning Center activities and operations.

Open Door Policy

Tech Tots invites you to drop in any time to observe your child at work and play. We also have several parent involvement activities throughout the school year.

Philosophy

Children learn through experiences, hands-on involvement and by using their senses to explore. At Tech Tots, we give children the opportunities needed to expand their sense of curiosity. Children become secure with themselves and the environment around them when their development is exercised and challenged.

As early childhood educators, we believe children learn best in a child-centered learning environment. When children are secure with their environment and peers, they are confident to explore and learn. Our goal is to help children enjoy their experiences and leave with an excitement for learning that enables them to be lifelong learners and problem solvers.

Play is the work of children and is the basic way in which young children gain knowledge. Preschool teachers plan opportunities for spontaneous play, guided play, directed play or investigative play to teach new skills and concepts. Our preschool program is designed to encourage learning through play, hands-on activities and small and large group discovery time.

Programs

Toddler Program

Your two-year-old will learn and grow in an atmosphere that is developmentally appropriate for the age and stage of your child. The curriculum is set up for your individual children to experience success each day. Your toddler's day will be filled with opportunities to develop his/her fine and gross motor skills, all while playing.

Preschool Program

Three-year-old children are beginning to enjoy more social activities and to interact with each other. Your preschooler will have opportunities for large and small group activities, free choice of center play, role play and creative development. We will introduce number sense, language skills and recognition of the alphabet.

VPK Program

Four-year old children are exuberant and ready for everything...JUST ASK THEM! They will be exposed to letters, numbers, colors, shapes, concept words and writing. Exposure to everything is the goal at Tech Tots. They are not expected to learn everything, just to be exposed to it. They are interested in learning which is fulfilled through play, small and large group activity, song and dance. Again, we follow an age and stage appropriate curriculum and unconditional positive regard with a loving, nurturing environment.

Attendance

Attendance is important and necessary for children to adapt well to new situations. If your child will be absent, please contact Tech Tots and let us know. We are concerned about your children and would like to know if they are ill and to let them know their presence is important to us.

If your child will be late, please arrange to be here before nap time. If late due to a doctor's appointment, please bring a note.

All children should be in the center by 9:30 AM in order to participate in the learning activities offered. We ask that you notify Tech Tots should your child be arriving late and make prior arrangements if your child will be late. Children will not be accepted after 10:00 AM without a doctor's note or making prior arrangements.

Nap times:	2-year-olds	11:30 AM
	3-year-olds	11:45 AM
	4-year-olds	12:00 PM

Students in the VPK classrooms should be settled in their classroom 15 minutes before they are scheduled to begin. Experiencing the same routine each and support learning.

Parent and Community Participation

Parents are encouraged to volunteer in the preschool. Studies have shown that children have greater success when parents are involved in their children's education. In addition, the program increases in quality as more adult supervision and guidance is provided.

All parents must have a negative tuberculosis skin test prior to participating in the classroom. Community resources are also an important part of each preschool's operations. Donated goods and services enhance our program.

The program recruits volunteers for additional resources. High school and local community college students volunteer with our programs. All volunteers must have an approved volunteer card from SJCS.

Parent Communication

The SJCS- Tech Tots Preschool Program encourages an “open door” policy that includes visitation and observation. Parent activities, talents and skills are always welcome.

Formal parent/teacher conferences occur twice annually. Informal conferences may take place any time throughout the course of the year.

Newsletters will be sent home weekly. The Parent Communication Board is located near the classroom entrance. It contains menus, weekly lesson plans, calendar of events, parent volunteer sign-up sheet, program information and the class newsletter. Please check the board on a daily basis.

Medical Exclusion Policy

Tech Tots is a program for healthy children. A child who is not well does not benefit from our program and can adversely affect the health of other children. If you have any doubts about your child’s health, please keep your child at home and contact your family physician.

No child shall come to class or stay in class when the following symptoms are present and children brought to school with the following symptoms will be sent home:

- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Body rash
- Sore throat and swollen glands
- Eye discharge or pink eye
- Head lice or nits
- Severe coughing
- Yellow skin or eyes
- A child with discolored discharge from the nose or extreme congestion causing difficulty breathing.
- Fever within the last 24 hours
- Failure to comply with the mandated health examination, immunization and tuberculosis skin testing requirements.

Children must be symptom free for 24 hours before returning, and fever free for 24 hours without the aid of medication.

When a sick child is taken home from school, he/she is required to stay home the following day to ensure that he/she has a chance to recover. If a child is out more than 3 days, a medical release from the doctor is required to return to school. If a child is too sick to go outside, the child should remain home from school. The teacher will note the health status of each child every morning.

Arrival and Departure

All children should be in the center by 9:30 AM in order to participate in the learning activities offered. We ask that you notify Tech Tots should your child be arriving late and make prior arrangements if your child will be late; children will not be accepted after 10:00 AM without a doctor's note or making prior arrangements.

Sign In/Sign Out Procedures

Your child must be signed in and out each day by the designated responsible adult who is 18 years or older. Signature must include full first and last name and include the time of sign in and sign out. Only adults listed on the child's application form/emergency card will be allowed to take the child from the preschool program.

Anyone picking up the child must be prepared to show picture identification. No other person than those who appear on the emergency card will be allowed to pick up your child. In the case of separation/divorce, court documents must be provided to inform the site of custodial rights and the days if the non-custodial parent may pick up the child. No changes to the pick-up authorization form will be accepted by phone. This policy is strictly enforced to ensure the safety of your child. The Department of Children and Families requires you to sign in/out log to document your attendance. Therefore, please sign your child in and out accurately and daily.

Pick-up Policy

Prompt arrival and departure of students to and from the program is expected. Should a late pick up occur, a fee at the rate of \$1.00 per minute beyond the preschool closing time will be charged. When 30 minutes has elapsed beyond the preschool closing time, the Sheriff's and/or DCF office will be called. A total of five late pickups may result in termination from the program.

Arrive promptly at dismissal time. Sign your child out when you exit the classroom. If you will be late in arriving, please call.

Safety in the Parking Lot

Our parking lot can be a busy place at certain times of the day. Help us in providing a safe environment by adhering to the following rules:

- Hold your child's hand in the parking lot.
- Make sure your child does not run ahead of or lag behind you upon arrival and pick up.
- Upon arrival, turn the engine off in your car.
- Drive slowly in the parking lot.
- Do not park in the designated bus area.
- Do not leave younger children in the car.

Medications

Our staff can administer medications to a child if necessary. Parent/Guardian are encouraged to administer medications at home prior to or after school hours. Tech Tots do not keep stock medicine in the school. If your child needs medication during school hours, please note the following:

- All medications must be age appropriate.

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- All medications (prescription and over the counter) must be in the original container.
- If a medication is not age appropriate, a doctors' note is required. The note must include the following: the child's name, medication name, recommended dosage, time intervals for administration, expiration date, prescriber's name and license number.
- All medication (prescription and over the counter) must have a completed, Child Care Facility: Authorization for Prescription and Non-Prescription medication form, signed by the parent and or guardian.

Medications will be stored according to the instructions on the label, kept out of the reach of children and returned to the parent, when no longer needed.

Minor Injuries and Medical Emergencies

Minor injuries will be given first aid attention by a qualified staff member. In the event of a medical emergency or accident, you will be contacted per the information on the emergency card. This agreement is also your authorization for SJCSD-Tech Tots to contact your family doctor and take whatever emergency measures are deemed necessary for the care and protection of your child.

Funding and Scholarships

Funding may be available for Tech Tots children by Episcopal Children's Services (904) 770-2565, toll -free 1-800-238-3463 or CareerSource (904) 819-0231. If you are a student at First Coast Technical College, you may qualify for several on-campus programs that may help with your childcare expenses.

Please see the director for any information you may require.

Enrollment

Tech Tots accepts enrollment applications from the community, students and staff of FCTC and St. Johns County School District. Persons wishing to enroll their child in Tech Tots childcare must complete all enrollment forms, provide a physical form 3040 and shot record form 680-D. These forms are available through your child's physician or the county health department.

Procedure for Enrollment

To enroll children in the preschool, you may call Curemia Dailey at (904) 547-3490 or email Curemia.Dailey@stjohns.k12.fl.us. You may call and come visit for a tour at your leisure.

When you come to enroll, please bring the following documents with you:

- Birth Certificate
- Immunization record

When the forms have been completed, a contract for preschool services will be written and a date of entry into the program agreed upon. This contract will indicate days and hours for preschool services following the St. Johns County School District calendar.

No child will be admitted to the center until this procedure and all forms have been completed. Preschool procedures ensure that personal information concerning students in the program are given to authorized individuals; furthermore, no information with respect to the confidential record of a student will be released at any time without the written approval of the parents/guardians unless under court order. That release will only be done by the Preschool Director.

Admission Policy for Re-enrollees:

If a child has been dropped from the program for any reason and the parents/guardians desire to readmit them, they will be notified when an opening occurs and their child will be considered as a new enrollee.

Readmission will require a new preschool contract with the program including emergency information and notice of action. Children who wish to attend preschool for a second year and are too young to enter kindergarten must be reenrolled.

Immunizations and Medical Assessment

Each child must have immunizations up to date for their age. Tech Tots Preschool may admit a child who is lacking one or more required doses if the doses are not currently due on the condition that they receive the remaining doses when due.

Children entering our program are required to submit a completed physical exam within 30 days. If this is not received within the timeline, the student may be released.

Withdrawal from the Program

If you wish to withdraw your child from the program, two-week notice is required. You must notify your preschool site Director. If you fail to follow these procedures, you are liable for any fees due on your child's account.

Toys from Home/Personal Possessions

A cubby is provided for each child in our program. Label all of your child's belongings. **Items such as toys, candy, gum and money are prohibited to avoid hurt feelings, breakage or loss.** In the event of show and tell, children are not permitted to bring toys associated with violence including guns, knives and swords. We are not responsible for lost, damaged or stolen personal items.

Dress Code and Clothing

Children should wear comfortable, casual clothing. We will be doing many hands-on and messy projects including painting, playing in dirt and cooking. All clothes, especially coats and sweaters, should be marked with your child's name in permanent ink. Children need an extra set of marked clothing left at school. Please place this set of clothing in a plastic bag with the child's name on the outside for easy storage.

School Parties and Birthdays

Classrooms may have several parties throughout the year. Please inform the teacher if your child is not able to participate in these events. If parents choose to bring a birthday treat, we prefer a

treat that is nutritious, healthy and store bought. Please inform the teacher if your child will not be able to participate. Written consent must be on file for your child to participate.

Diaper Changing

We are required to change a child's diaper as soon as it is known to be wet or soiled. Please send in more diapers than you think your child will need. A medication slip must be completed for any creams, powders or ointments that you ask us to use on your child.

Potty Training

We will work with each family when your child is ready to be potty trained. We ask that you talk with the Tech Tots Learning staff or teacher and let them know you are interested in potty training your child. If you are NOT potty training at home, we will not potty train at school. Consistency at home and school is a MUST. If you and your child are ready, please supply plenty of clothes that are easy for your child and teacher to pull up and down (elastic waist) as this will help make potty training a success.

Naptime

We provide a quiet rest or naptime for all full-time children. Some children may need sleep; others may only rest. We will try to accommodate each child's sleep needs. Each child needs to bring a blanket for naptime. During quiet time, your child may be provided a book or nap comfort item.

Meals and Snacks

Meals are provided at no cost. The menus are prepared in accordance with state nutritional guidelines. A copy of each month's menu will be posted on the parent communication board.

Children may also bring nutritious meals from home. Parents must provide food for children on special diets (Department of Children and Families a doctor's note must be provided). Please inform the teacher if your child has any known or suspected food allergies.

Transportation Arrangements

St. Johns County School District Tech Tots does not provide transportation to and from preschool. Parents are responsible to make their own arrangements.

Confidentiality

Information relating to your child is confidential and will not be released unless written authorization is provided by a parent or legal guardian. An exception will be made in the event of suspected child abuse. Preschool staff are mandated reporters and any such suspicion will be reported to Child Protective Services for immediate investigation and action.

Copies of a child's attendance record are available to parents / guardians, and funding agencies upon request, all others must accompany a court ordered request and will take two weeks to process. In the case of a separation/divorce, court documents must be provided to inform staff of custodial rights. The documents must be on file with the school office.

Enrolling Children with Special Needs

Enrollment for special needs children is made on an individual basis and based on Individualized Education Program (IEP) recommendations.

Formal Complaints

We strive to maintain a quality program. Prompt and equitable resolutions of complaints are practiced in the following manner:

- Initial contact should be made with the teacher. If the issue is not resolved, then the director should be contacted accordingly.

Crisis Response Plan

The St. Johns County School District site crisis response plan will be followed in the event of crisis necessitating emergency preparedness such as severe weather, evacuation or lock down. Details of this plan are available in the school office for staff only.

Discipline

St. Johns County School District Tech Tots Preschool believe that all children are entitled to a safe environment in which children's behavior that might pose a risk to the safety of others is minimized. The goal of this policy is to work with parents in a partnership to encourage the children to become creative, independent, responsible and socially appropriate. This involves teaching children to make responsible choices and accepting the consequences of such choices.

Our staff will use these guidance strategies:

- Active listening
- Positive verbal praise and acknowledgement
- Redirection
- Modification of the environment/schedule/transitions
- Clear and consistent direction
- Problem-solving with open-ended questions
- Thinking time (intervention technique where staff may remove child from area, either sitting next to or within teacher's view to assist a child in gaining self-control so he/she may safely return to the group.)

Aggressive behavior may result in a phone call to parents to pick up their child from the program. Aggressive behavior is defined as deliberate, repeated and uncontrolled attacks on others physically and/or verbally and uncontrolled behavioral patterns including, but not limited to, defiance, disrespect, biting, hitting, profanity or throwing of equipment.

If negative behavior becomes chronic, St. Johns County School District Tech Tots will convene a student study team. This team will be made up of all those involved with the child, either directly (parent and childcare staff) or indirectly (SJCS- Tech Tots Director of Preschool and other professionals, as appropriate). This team may be asked to review the child's progress and develop a behavior intervention plan.

If it appears that the child is not benefiting from the SJCSJ- Tech Tots preschool program the student study team will make the determination of discontinuing services based on the following factors:

- A child's behavior is consistently disruptive to the class.
- The child is of danger to him/herself or to others.
- The behavior intervention plan has been followed but has not yielded the desired results.

All attempts will be made to assist the family in finding alternative placement and services.

Termination from the Program

St. Johns County School District Tech Tots has carefully developed these conditions to ensure the safety of your child and the quality of the program. Our goal is to provide a safe, nurturing environment for all children with programs designed to suit each developmental level. Fees will not be refunded if services are terminated for failure to abide by these procedures.

Services may be terminated at any time for the following reasons:

- Excessive unexcused absences-10 per school year.
- Excessive late pick-ups of child-5 per year.
- Harm or injury to another child or adult in the program.
- Continuous disruptive behavior.
- Failure to submit physician's report within 30 days of enrollment.
- Failure to update child's immunizations as required by law.
- Failure to pay for the program service.

Rates and Tech Tots Tuition Policy

Tuition must be paid in advance for services rendered on the Friday before services are provided.

Additionally

- A \$15.00 late fee will be applied if not received by Monday of the current week.
- If tuition and late fees are not paid by Tuesday, your child may not return until tuition is paid in full.
- Tech Tots will not carry a balance for any reason.
- There are no discounts for absences.

If your child is part time:

- You must pay for all days they are scheduled to come.
- Part time children may only attend on their scheduled days.
- There is no part-time in the one-year-old room.

We follow the St. Johns County School District calendar; therefore Thanksgiving, winter, spring and summer breaks are the only times tuition is prorated or waived.

If your child does not attend during the summer but will return in the fall, a \$75.00 hold fee is required to guarantee their spot in the fall. This fee is also required to secure their spot while on the waiting list. Once enrolled, this fee will be applied to your first week of tuition.

There is a \$1.00 per minute late fee charged after 5:00 PM. This is to be paid in addition to your weekly tuition.

Fees

Registration \$125.00 per enrollment and per enrollee
Supplies \$100.00 annual due every September

Weekly Tuition

- Two-year-old room \$225.00
- Three-year-old room \$215.00
- Part time daily \$55.00 two-day minimum
- VPK wrap \$135.00
- Non VPK Days \$55.00 additional to regular weekly tuition
- After School Care \$100.00
- Four-year-old summer \$205.00
- Summer Camp \$200.00
- Field trips \$10.00 additional to regular weekly tuition.

Two-week written notice is required when withdrawing from school.

Daily Schedule

All daily schedules are posted in your child's classroom along with lesson plans for that week. These plans offer opportunities for the children to develop skills learn through play and become socially interactive. We encourage you to read these so that you may let your children know what to expect that day, what color we are studying or perhaps they have something to share that follows the theme of the day.

All children should be in the center by 9:30 AM in order to participate in the learning activities offered. We ask that you notify Tech Tots staff should your child be arriving late and make prior arrangements if your child will be late. Children will not be accepted after 10:00 AM without a doctor's note or making prior arrangements.

The daily preschool schedule varies by site. Please see the site supervisor for a copy. Weekly lesson plans are posted on the parent communication board. The lesson plans are designed to encourage children to discover, create, explore, experiment, observe, discuss and share.

Activities include:

- Dramatic play
- Art and cooking
- Manipulatives: blocks, construction, sand and water
- Music and movement
- Explorations in science and math
- Emerging reading and writing activities

Operating Schedule

Tech Tots operates on the St. Johns County Schools Master calendar. Tech Tots will remain open for full days on teacher planning and in-service days.

Tech Tots Hours

During the school year	Monday through Friday	7:00 AM – 4:00 PM
During the summer	Monday through Friday	7:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Transportation

Transportation of the child to and from the childcare center is the responsibility of parents.

Holidays

Tech Tots will be closed on the following days:

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| ○ Monday | September 2, 2024 | Labor Day |
| ○ Friday | November 11, 2024 | Veterans Day |
| ○ Wednesday-Friday | November 25-29, 2024 | Thanksgiving |
| ○ Friday-Wednesday | December 23- January 2, 2025 | Winter Break |
| ○ Monday | January 20, 2025 | Martin Luther King Day |
| ○ Monday | February 17, 2025 | Presidents Day |
| ○ Monday-Friday | March 17-21, 2025 | Spring Break |
| ○ Friday | April 18, 2025 | Holiday |
| ○ Monday | May 26, 2025 | Memorial Day |

No charges for multiple day closures.

Summer Hours and Fees

Monday – Friday 7:00 AM – 4:00 PM

2-year-olds	\$225.00
3-year-olds	\$215.00
4-year-olds	\$205.00
5 & up	\$200.00

Part time \$55.00 daily 2-day minimum

Weekly field trips for school agers and weekly water play all ages

CHARACTER COUNTS! in St. Johns County

In 1998, the St. Johns County School District, along with area businesses, youth organizations and civic groups, selected the national character education program of **CHARACTER COUNTS!** as a countywide initiative to instill positive character traits in our young people. Each fall during the national observance we honor area businesses that have contributed to the **CHARACTER COUNTS!** effort, and in the spring, the district sponsors the annual American Youth Character Awards program to recognize high school students of good character. As adults we are responsible for modeling appropriate behavior which has been proven as the best way to teach character in others. Several years ago, the SJCS D became the first school district in Florida to implement Pursuing Victory with Honor in all of its athletic programs. Character education is an important part of every School Improvement Plan, a major component of each Student Code of Conduct and our Strategic Plan.



How CHARACTER COUNTS! Began

In July 1992 the Josephson Institute of Ethics brought together an eminent group of educators, youth leaders and ethics scholars to see if a common ground and common language could be found concerning the need for and content of character education. The statement that emerged from that meeting, the Aspen Declaration, lists six core ethical values: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship, that form the foundation of our society.

We have infused the Six Pillars of Character into our school district. CHARACTER COUNTS! is not an add-on program but a means of enhancing the school's ability to concentrate on traditional, academic goals. It's a carefully designed, long term, community-based strategy to permanently embed character development goals in schools and youth organizations. We have been training teachers and administrators as to how CHARACTER COUNTS! can become a way of life and, in turn, become a part of our entire community.

The **CHARACTER COUNTS!** initiative is non-partisan. Its members include representatives of secular, religious, government and civic entities. It is not a means to introduce religion into public education, though it is consistent with and in no way hostile to religious and spiritually based beliefs about ethics. This initiative has no ideological or political agenda other than strengthening the moral fiber of the next generation.

The St. Johns County School District has embraced the program for all of its students and was awarded the Points of Light Award in 2003 by the Governor for the positive effect this program has had on our youth. The American Youth Character Awards program was honored in 2005 as an exemplary recognition program by the Sunshine State School Public Relations Association. Effective character education must be based on core ethical values, in particular the Six Pillars of Character.

Six Pillars of Character Counts



Trustworthiness Be honest • Don't deceive, cheat, or steal • Be reliable — do what you say you'll do • Have the courage to do the right thing • Build a good reputation • Be loyal — stand by your family, friends, and country



Respect Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule • Be tolerant and accepting of differences • Use good manners, not bad language • Be considerate of the feelings of others • Don't threaten, hit or hurt anyone • Deal peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements



Responsibility Do what you are supposed to do • Plan ahead • Persevere: keep on trying! • Always do your best • Use self-control • Be self-disciplined • Think before you act — consider the consequences • Be accountable for your words, actions, and attitudes • Set a good example for others



Fairness Play by the rules • Take turns and share • Be open-minded; listen to others • Don't take advantage of others • Don't blame others carelessly • Treat all people fairly



Caring Be kind • Be compassionate and show you care • Express gratitude • Forgive others • Help people in need • Be charitable and altruistic



Citizenship Do your share to make your school and community better • Cooperate • Get involved in community affairs • Stay informed; vote • Be a good neighbor • Obey laws and rules • Respect authority • Protect the environment • Volunteer



Tech Tots Child Care and Learning Center

Parent Handbook Signature Form

Below is a signed agreement confirming that I am in receipt of a parent handbook.

By signing this agreement...

I, the Parent/Guardian, have read, understand and will abide by the policies and procedures within the Parent Handbook of Tech Tots Child Care along with annual changes.

Where to Find a Copy of the Handbook?

- Most current version is located on the hallway bulletin board and the Learning Center office.
- A current copy is emailed out annually in August.
- You may at any time request a current copy to review by reaching out via telephone or email to the Director.

Print Parent/Guardian Name _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date _____

Reviewed by:

Print Tech Tot Director Name _____

Tech Tot Director Signature _____

Date _____