



Star Lab
EDUCATE. LIBERATE.

FAMILY HANDBOOK 2026 - 2027

DISCOVER LEARNING DIFFERENTLY

STAR LAB 1

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STAR LAB 2

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ABOUT STAR LAB

MISSION & PHILOSOPHY

Star Lab delivers high levels of learning and joy so all children can share their unique gifts with the world.

We believe that by celebrating each child as an individual, breaking down subjects into individual topics, and connecting learning across different areas of our lives, each child will achieve at high levels.

We welcome your partnership on this journey.



Table of Contents

About Star Lab	2
• Mission & Philosophy	
Welcome Letter	4
Our Faculty	5-6
Our Approach	7
Our Toolkit	8
Getting Started	9
• Admission & Enrolment Process	
Tuition Information	10
What to Expect	11
A Day at Star Lab	12
• Hours of Operation & Schedule	
Policies & Procedures	13
• Arrival & Dismissal Procedures	
• Attendance Policies	
Nutrition & Health	14
• Meals at Star Lab	
• Health & Medications	
Family Partnership	15
Nurturing the Whole Child	16
Star Lab Promise	17
Learning Philosophy	18
Enrichment Programs	19
Field Trips & Activities	20
Behavioral Guidance	21
Positive Discipline	22
Safety Procedures	23
Parent Resources	24
• School Calendar & Events	
• Communication Channels	
• Required Policy Statements	
Statement of Understanding	25

WELCOME TO STAR LAB

We know children are excited to learn, and we believe they deserve a school they will love.

At Star Lab, we build on each child's strengths and equip them with skills and knowledge to unlock anything they aspire to achieve. Families are our most important partners, and we work with you to share your child's progress and understand your goals.

Star Lab measures success by both academic achievement and overall wellbeing. We believe childhood is magical and promise to help you enjoy this special time. We value transparency in our policies and procedures and aim to exceed your expectations with our responsiveness and our program.

This handbook explains our policies, and we welcome any questions you may have. Each family contributes to our school's success, and we value your input.

Thank you for trusting us with your precious child. We are committed to their learning and joy.

Please let us know how we can better serve you and your family at any time.

Together on the journey,
Alison Rini, Head of School



OUR FACULTY



Alison Rini, Founder and Head of School:

Alison has taught elementary grades in New York City, the U.S. Virgin Islands (St. Croix), and Sarasota, Florida since 2000. She has been a principal and assistant principal at Island Village Montessori, Pine View School for the Gifted, and Cranberry Elementary School. Helping your children learn and grow at Star Lab is her dream come true. She loves to read and make new friends.

Nan Gramaglia, Teacher:

Nan Gramaglia is a dedicated educator with over 20 years of experience in the field, holding a librarian degree that enriches her approach to teaching. Nan has worked in both international schools and Montessori settings, bringing a diverse and well-rounded perspective to her students. Nan loves cooking, reading, traveling, and working with children.



Natalia Pal, Teacher:

Natalia has 20 years of experience teaching preschool, elementary, and Montessori students. She was born in Argentina and is bilingual in Spanish. Outside the classroom, Natalia enjoys spending time with her husband and two kids. They love going to the beach, watching movies, reading, and engaging in outdoor sports. Natalia is also passionate about nutrition and promoting healthy eating habits.



OUR FACULTY

Danette Williams, Caterer:

Danette loves to cook and feed people healthy food. She is excited about introducing children to new flavors and exposing them gradually to different recipes. She loves to support the community through her nonprofit, Newtown Nation. She is committed to serving every person with dignity and uplifting young and old.



Yolanda Nash, Teacher:

Yolanda is from Queens, NY, and she moved to Sarasota in 2013. She has owned and operated yoga studios for twenty years, leading classes for all levels from children to adults. She is passionate about teaching and dedicated to inspiring high levels of learning. She has two teenaged children and she loves cooking, going to the beach, and practicing yoga.

Erin Foss, Teacher:

Erin is a Sarasota native with a Masters degree and 8 years experience teaching English Language Arts and tutoring in literacy. She is passionate about helping students grow in curiosity and learn to love language and storytelling.

When she isn't teaching, Erin loves backpacking, reading, writing fantasy and sci-fi, and dancing of all kinds.



OUR FACULTY



**Sabina Valery,
Admissions Director/Reading Coach:**

Sabina was raised in Venice and earned a Master's in teaching in Virginia. She has many years working in public and charter schools, and is passionate about providing students with the foundational skills they need to learn and grow! Outside of school Sabina loves spending time at the beach, taking dance classes, and reading.

Candice Lamb, Teaching Assistant:

Candice loves children and has extensive experience in multigenerational care. Star Lab is her first time in a classroom teaching position, and she is an incredible assistant to Ms. Nan in our Kindergarten.



Emma Meyers, Teaching Assistant:

Emma grew up as a Montessori kid and she has taught at all age levels including teaching lower elementary at a Waldorf school. She has joined our 1st/2nd grade classroom at Star Lab 1, where she shares her love of nature and crafts with our students.



OUR FACULTY

C'Dara Manuel, Teaching Assistant:

C'Dara has worked in many leadership roles in the community as well as coaching youth sports. She started at Star Lab as a camp counselor, and has now moved to support children in the classroom in our 2nd/3rd grade. C'Dara also drives the school van for the campus shuttle as well as community field trips. She has high standards for our students because she believes in their ability.



Susan Harvin-Peterson, Teaching Assistant:

Susan has worked in education for decades and loves to teach children to read. She grew up in Newtown and provides so much interesting historical information about our community. Ms. Susan teaches reading and specials in our 3rd-5th grade class.

Kareem Robinson, Facilities Support:

Kareem came to Star Lab 2 to help with the logistics of sharing space with our partner organizations. He keeps everything running behind the scenes so our teachers can focus on instruction, and everywhere he goes he makes things better. Our boys are excited about their first male teacher!



OUR APPROACH

Every piece of our program is designed around children's needs.

Components of our approach include:

- **One step at a time** – We break down assignments so that children learn one thing at a time instead of asking them to do an overly complex task all at once.
- **Personalized learning** – Each child progresses at his or her own pace. They can test at any time, and once they have passed a test they move on to the next task in that subject.
- **Movement** – We believe that movement is essential for children, and that they learn with their bodies as well as their brains. Each day starts with movement stations and each hour ends with recess.
- **Play** – Learning is hard work and children can get exhausted from the effort. Recess breaks at the end of each hour support movement and free play, so children can feel the release they need before getting back to learning.
- **Partnership** – Parents are included as much as they would like. We have weekly conferences and updates available and many opportunities to volunteer or join us for activities. You can watch your child's progress in real time, and celebrate their amazing achievements!

We welcome your feedback as we go through the year so we can continue to improve your child's experience.



OUR TOOLKIT

HANDS-ON MATERIALS

Children learn all different subjects by exploring with their hands. Many of the learning materials were developed in Montessori schools and have been successfully used for over 100 years.

WHOLE-CHILD APPROACH

We work with children, instead of against their nature, to support their academic and social success. Our students have 45 minutes of explicit instruction followed by 15 minutes of play.

REGULAR COMMUNICATION

Because each child is progressing at his or her own pace, we stay in regular touch with families so you can understand your child's progress and how they are performing in relation to expectations.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

We value parents and families as partners, and it is our goal to serve your family's needs as much as possible. You are welcome to come in and visit, to observe, or to participate in recess, meals, and songs.

GETTING STARTED

ADMISSION PROCESS

For the 26-27 school year, Star Lab is open to any student in the state of Florida from Kindergarten - 5th grade. We have limited PreK spots as well.

Steps to Apply:

1. Schedule a school visit for you and your child
2. Complete the Interest Form online at [Star Lab's website](#)
3. Sign-up for [Step Up for Students scholarship](#) if you intend to use state scholarship funds to pay for tuition.

NOTE: General education students should register for the Family Empowerment Scholarship Educational Options (**FES-EO**) or the **FTC**. Students with a disability should register for the Family Empowerment Scholarship Unique Abilities (**FES-UA**).

Steps to Enroll:

1. Once your application is accepted, you will receive enrollment forms to complete to share additional information that will help us serve your child.
2. Finally, submit either a \$500 deposit, or proof of approval for funds with Step Up for Students to reserve your child's space at Star Lab.

Star Lab Application



Step Up
For Students



TUITION INFORMATION

Star Lab is a private school, and we are committed to making world-class education attainable for every child and family. While we have significant costs to offer our program, we are currently able to offer discounts to families using state scholarship funds (Step Up for Students) for tuition so that there are no additional out-of-pocket expenses for our academic program for students using the Step Up scholarships.

Parents using Step Up for Students to pay tuition simply login to their EMA account every quarter to authorize payments.

Students with disabilities who require additional services beyond our academic program may incur additional expenses, depending on the cost of requested therapies. Families will meet with Star Lab administration to determine which services can be covered by scholarship funds, and if there are any services which can be covered by family insurance or which will incur additional charges.

FULL SCHOLARSHIP

Students without a disability will pay their entire tuition with Step Up for Students scholarship funds - FES-EO. These funds are loaded into your child's account, and you designate Star Lab as the recipient once each quarter (four times per year).

INDEPENDENT PAYMENT

If a family chooses not to use the state scholarships, the minimum tuition will be \$1,150/month. (Total of \$11,500 per year) Additional charges may apply for needed therapies.

PARTIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Students with disabilities apply for the FES-UA state scholarship. Star Lab will work with the family to apply these funds to any needed services. However, if parents and school agree the student requires additional therapies beyond what can be covered by the funding, parents will be responsible for these additional payments.

WHAT TO EXPECT

We are committed to your child's success and will support their growth in academics, social behavior, emotional development, and physical skills.

We believe challenges are opportunities for learning, and we help your child learn from mistakes. We work with families to set long-term goals and determine current priorities. For example, if honesty is an important family value, we will make a point to highlight honest behaviors and remind your child of your expectations.

FIRST DAY PREPARATION

- We host a back to school evening prior to the beginning of school so students can begin to feel comfortable at our building. Details of the event will be sent in advance to your registered email.
- Additionally, your child may be invited to complete an onsite academic screening before school starts. This helps Star Lab get to know their academic levels and personality.

ON THE FIRST DAY

- We start at 8am! Parents are invited to walk their child into the classroom the first day.
- We will welcome the children to begin an activity, and say "see you later"!
- When you pick your child up at dismissal they will have lots of exciting things to tell you!

As a school, we are committed to learning and we welcome your feedback to better meet our goals.



A DAY AT STAR LAB

DAILY SCHEDULE

The school day runs from 8 am to 3 pm. This is a long day for little ones – we work hard and we play hard – and we expect they will be tired afterwards!

- Before care is available from 7:15 am to 8 am
- After care is available from 3 pm to 4:45 pm for K/1st.
- Aftercare is available from 3 pm to 6 pm at the Boys & Girls Club.

NOTE – Beforecare and aftercare hours are based on full student enrollment. If we have fewer students and fewer staff members, we may have to adjust the hours.

	MONDAY-THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:00 - 9:00 AM	Movement, Breakfast & Morning Meeting	
9:00 - 11:45 AM	Academics & Brain Breaks	STAR DAYS Special Guests Trips to explore Activities Responsibility for projects
11:45 AM - 12:45 PM	Lunch & Recess	
12:45 - 1:45 PM	Academics & Brain Break	
1:45 - 2:45 PM	Arts Exploration	
2:45 - 3:00 PM	Recess & Dismissal	

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

- For the first week, we need to know what time your child is going home each day and who is picking them up.
- CAR LINE (AM) – You can drop your child off with a staff member at the front of the school between 7:45 – 8:00 am.
- CAR LINE (PM) – Children will be at the front door for dismissal from 2:45 – 3 pm.
- Parents who are dropping off or picking up at other times will need to park and come to the door inside.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Attendance policies are set by the state of Florida. Students who are between the ages of 6 and 16 are required to “attend school regularly during the entire school term”.

Star Lab respects all families’ rights to direct their children’s education, and our goal is that both you and your child experience value from regular school attendance. If your child has more than 4 absences in a quarter, we require a doctor’s note to maintain scholarship eligibility.

As we also want to keep our community healthy, we appreciate everyone adhering to the following guidance. Please keep your child home if your child is sick. Examples:

- fever over 100 degrees within the past 24 hours
- vomiting or diarrhea
- inability to stay awake

We respect your decisions as a family, however, if you can text or call the school in advance to let us know your child will be staying home, the communication helps us plan our day.

NUTRITION & HEALTH

NUTRITION & MEALS

- Star Lab provides two nutritious meals to our students daily
- Breakfast is served at 8:30 am and lunch at 12:15 pm **free of charge to all students.**
- Family members are invited to join us, but any non-students will need to bring their own food.
- Children are welcome to bring their own meals or snacks. We also appreciate snack donations to the school.
- Our goal as a school is to provide the best learning environment for your child, and so we will communicate with you if there are food items that seem to interfere with learning.
- Be sure to communicate any known or suspected allergies to the our staff.

HEALTH & MEDICATION POLICIES

The state of Florida requires that every school collect information about each child's vaccination status. To enroll at Star Lab, you need to provide proof of vaccinations, or to sign a form stating that you decline vaccinations. Information about both forms are available in our enrollment documents.

Star Lab does not have a medical doctor or nurse on site. We can provide the following medications and ointments during the school day with your permission:

- Sunscreen (provided by family)
- Calamine lotion
- Neosporin (or similar antibiotic ointment)
- Any prescription medication for your child that you provide in its original packaging, accompanied by a doctor's orders

You have the opportunity to give permission when you complete the enrollment documents.

FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

- Families are the most important teachers in a child's life. Star Lab aims to support you with our program.
- We have an open-door policy so you can see our program anytime.
- Please avoid distracting students during observations.
- To interact with other students, family members need volunteer screening. We can help with the fingerprinting process.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

- Every Friday, teachers have time set aside for family communication.
- You can choose your preferred way to be contacted: phone call, email, text (via Newton app), or in-person.
- These conferences help you understand your child's progress and performance.

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

- Families are welcome to join us during various activities - let us know what you are interested in helping with.
- Regular volunteers need fingerprinting for background screening. We can assist with this process.

HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTION

- We offer presentations throughout the year to show your child's learning in reading and math.
- We can provide materials for home use to help your child practice and improve.

NURTURING THE WHOLE CHILD

Star Lab is designed to help children learn with:

- Engaging and attractive learning experiences, right at each student's level
- Frequent breaks to help with self-control, mood, and recharging
- Friday activities to bring learning to life through projects and explorations.

Star Lab hopes to make families' lives easier by providing:

- Free before- and aftercare
- Free meals for students
- 5 free uniform shirts
- Family decisions respected and honored by the school
- Clear policies that help everyone stay healthy

STAR LAB PROMISE

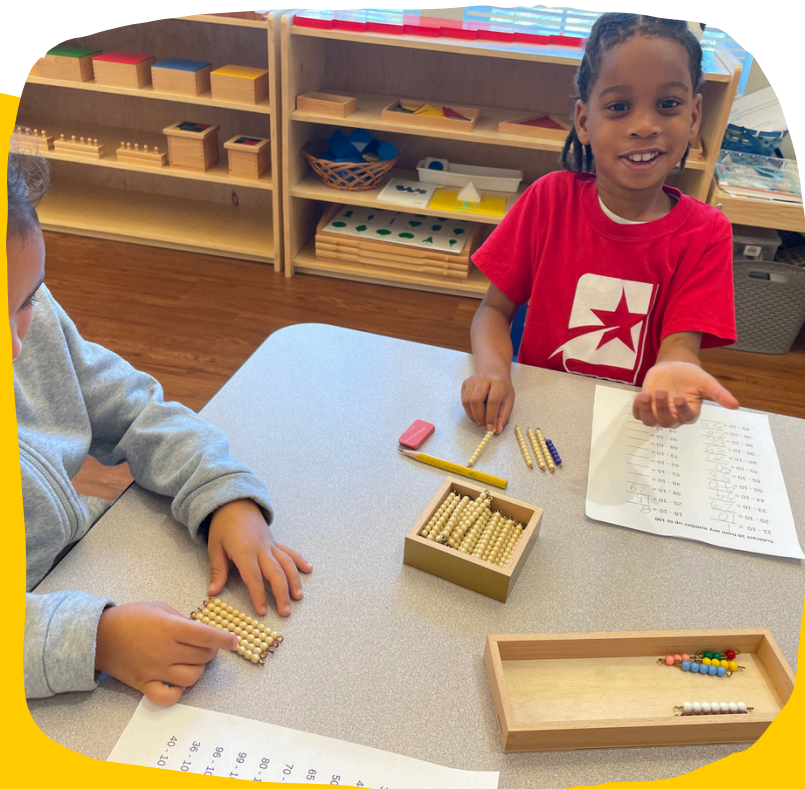
ACADEMIC PROMISE

Star Lab believes that every child needs to be given the ability to read and perform mathematics competently to have control over their future.

We also believe that the elementary grades are the most important times to prepare children for a lifetime of learning. For this reason, we are committed to teaching every child to read and perform math on grade level within two years of enrolling at Star Lab.

We will communicate with you regularly to help you understand how your child is performing in relation to these achievable standards.

We offer resources you can use at home to reinforce any areas of struggle, and we work hard to overcome any obstacles in school.



LEARNING PHILOSOPHY

WE MAXIMIZE THESE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF LEARNING FOR YOUR CHILD'S BENEFIT.

1

Attention – We help your child direct his or her attention to the next essential step in his or her academic journey.

2

Engagement – We use positive relationships and knowledge of your child as an individual to help him or her connect with the lessons and to actively think about the content.

3

Feedback – Learning occurs when we do something we couldn't do before. A key ingredient at Star Lab is personalized guidance that helps children discard incorrect understandings and move towards the desired or correct approach.

4

Consolidation – Sufficient practice is essential for skills to become automatic, or knowledge to become internalized. Our staff is skilled at providing ample practice opportunities that help children reach high levels of mastery.

NOTE: A key way that families can support consolidation is by ensuring that your child receives ample sleep for their age. Sleep is essential for good health and it is also required for learning!

ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

MOTOR LAB

Every morning starts with a circuit through different stations of our Motor Lab. These stations support growth in core strength, balance, coordination, large and fine motor control, and stamina. All students benefit from developing these capabilities, as they underlie many aspects of successful school performance.

ARTS EDUCATION

We believe strongly in activating our human heritage as artists and creatives, and we welcome experts in various fields to guide our students. We incorporate dancing, drama, music, and visual arts to give our students another area to excel and express themselves.

STEM

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics are essential for many high-powered careers. We partner with Brainy Bots and other STEM providers to electrify our students with exciting hands-on demonstrations.



FIELD TRIPS & ACTIVITIES

Our goal is your child's lifelong success, and for that reason it is essential to extend the lessons they learn beyond the four walls of the school.

We work with all students to develop the confidence and self-control to successfully participate in field trips, starting with smaller excursions and building to walking field trips and van rides to local attractions.

Star Lab is committed to raising all necessary funds to finance these trips so all students can expand their horizons regardless of family means.



BEHAVIORAL GUIDANCE

At Star Lab, we are committed to supporting your child through any struggles they may face, whether it's completing work or following rules. Here's how we handle these situations:

- Supportive Solutions – We involve you as much as possible in finding supportive solutions for your child.
- Zero Tolerance on Violence – Any physical outbursts must be resolved immediately. We never use physical punishment but welcome creative solutions from parents.
- Serious Challenges – If your child faces ongoing, serious challenges, we have a clear procedure:
 - a. Conference: Parents, the teacher, and the head of school will meet to discuss how to best support your child.
 - b. Plan Development: Together, we will create a plan and set a trial period to implement it.
 - c. Review: At the end of the trial period, we will review the plan's effectiveness and decide on the best environment for your child's education.

If a child's needs cannot be met or if their behavior continually disrupts the class, they may be asked to withdraw from Star Lab.

Additionally, if a parent's behavior is destructive, disruptive, or undermines the school environment, the family may also be asked to withdraw.

Our goal is to work with families who want to be at Star Lab, striving for mutually satisfactory resolutions whenever possible.

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

As unexpected events come up, our goal is to instill your child with skills and confidence to successfully navigate difficulties:

SELF AWARENESS

We will help children notice their feelings and find productive ways to express them.

SOLVE PROBLEMS

We will help children identify problems and suggest solutions.

CONTROL ATTENTION

We believe that attention is one of our super powers, and we will teach the children strategies to use to help them overcome distractions, maintain attention, and complete tasks.

EXPRESSION

We believe our students are future leaders and we will give them practice in sharing their ideas with other people.

NAVIGATE CONFLICT

We will help students use words to stand up for themselves and understand others. We will help them apologize when needed.

COLLABORATION

All of the skills that our students are learning are going to give them power to change the world for the better. We will help them learn to collaborate with others, using all their social skills and academic knowledge, to work towards a common goal.

SAFETY PROCEDURES

Your child's safety is our top priority. Our policies serve this goal, and we may adjust them to ensure their safety.

- Star Lab's exterior doors are always locked for everyone's protection during the school day. If you arrive at a time other than scheduled arrival and dismissal, you will need to ring the doorbell or call the school phone to get let in. Thank you for understanding that this allows us to make sure only authorized people are in the building.
- We practice safety drills as required by the state – all children learn how to exit the building in case of a fire or interior emergency, or how to stay safe inside if there is an exterior danger.

SEVERE WEATHER PROCEDURES

RAIN & WINDSTORMS

Children will be kept inside for their protection if there is lightning, significant rain, or excessive wind.

TORNADOS

Children will be directed to interior spot in the building, and taught to duck and cover away from windows.

HURRICANES

We expect sufficient notice prior to a hurricane, and school would be canceled so that families can take shelter. You will receive updates via school communication tools such as email or Newton (app).

PARENT RESOURCES

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

- **Phone call:** For any time-sensitive concern when we need to reach you right away
- **Newton:** Online app used to take attendance, share pictures, and send messages (similar to texting)
- **Email:** For tuition payments, newsletters, or updates to help you participate in your child's education

Our teachers are committed to clear communication with you, and will send you regular academic updates using your preferred communication method.

SCHOOL CALENDAR & EVENTS



School holidays will coincide with those of Sarasota Public Schools. The classrooms will be closed on all legal holidays, with extended breaks for Thanksgiving, Christmas/New Years, Spring Break, and Summer.

NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Star Lab does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin in admission or hiring policies. In its hiring practices the school will further not discriminate on the basis of age or economic status. Star Lab follows all ADA requirements.

Star Lab is not affiliated with any particular denomination or religion, and we are friendly to all!

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

I certify that I have read and have had an opportunity to discuss with the administration any questions or concerns about the rules and policies contained in the Star Lab Family Handbook.

I understand that as a parent at Star Lab I am encouraged to participate in program activities. I also understand that the Handbook guidelines may be changed by Star Lab when circumstances so require.

Student Name: _____

Parent Name (print): _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

NOTE - You will have an opportunity to electronically indicate any questions you have and to sign that you have read this handbook in the online enrollment forms. You do not need to print this page.



THANK
YOU FOR
BEING A
PART OF
THE STAR
LAB
FAMILY