



Education Philosophy Handbook

CLASSROOM GUIDELINES

Supervision:

- Be aware of environmental safety to prevent injuries rather than dealing with hurt children after the fact.
- Allow children to initiate contact with you, and to freely choose activities on their own.
- Stay low, lots of standing adults put children in a "redwood forest."
- Always stop children from hurting themselves, other children or adults.
- When speaking to children, get close and on their height level. Yelling at children from across the room is not effective and sets an inappropriate example.
- Keep as much adult conversation out of the classroom as possible.
- The majority of good teaching is in observing the children's play - learning about them by seeing what they are interested in and capable of on their own.
- Encourage children to do as much as they can by themselves. Provide the minimum amount of help (at times none is needed) so that children can experience a sense of accomplishment.
- Foster pro-social behavior by noticing and reflecting to children their appropriate, thoughtful, creative and responsible play.
- Avoid comparison and competition among children, as it damages self-esteem and limits cooperation; "I saw you both hold onto the railing and climb the stairs fast."
- Work to acknowledge children's feelings, and value the age appropriate impulse behind their behavior, even when you cannot accept their actions.

Limit Setting:

- Redirect inappropriate or unsafe behavior by encouraging children to use their words, walk away, find another toy, and/or ask for help.
- Tell children what they can do, instead of what they cannot do (i.e.. "Walk inside" instead of "Do not run").
- If you need to do something to or for a child, tell them first; "I'm going to check your diaper now, I'm going to lift you up now." This prepares and includes them.
- Never judge or label children's behavior in subjective terms such as "bad", "nice", "good", "mean", "selfish", etc. Separate the child from the behavior.
- Encourage children to come up with their own mutually acceptable solutions to their conflicts whenever possible. Offer children alternative solutions if they cannot agree on one.
- Give children a choice only when you intend to leave the decision up to them. "Where do you want to park your bike before snack?" The child must come inside for snack but the choice of where to park is theirs.
- Communicate with families to develop a consistent approach to limit setting.
- When limits are necessary, they should be clearly defined and consistently applied, so that the children know their adults can be counted on to maintain needed boundary lines.
- Turn over a questionable situation to another classroom teacher, especially if you are unable to deal with a difficult conflict or problem effectively.

PRIMARY CAREGIVING GUIDELINES

Primary Caregiving is a fundamental aspect of our philosophy and mission. In order to foster the development of close relationships, CCSLV follows the Program for Infant Toddler Caregivers (PITC) policy of primary care. In the Toddler room, the teachers are each matched with 4 - 6 primary care children, and in the Toddler Plus room, each teacher is matched with 6 – 8 primary care children. The security of each child's attachment to his or her primary caregiver(s) is crucial for their healthy social-emotional development, as well as for all other areas of learning. It is our goal to offer group care in a setting conducive to primary, continuous care for each child, so that we may foster the growth of such attachments.

Primary Care at CCSLV is done through regular caregiving routines between the teachers and children. This includes, but is not limited to greetings and goodbyes, transition times, snack and meal times, diaper changing and toilet learning, self help activities, teacher child interactions, child assessments, and documentation and curriculum planning. Each primary caregiver knows the individual needs, temperaments and daily rhythms of the children in their care, and can therefore plan for each individual child's early success.

Through primary care, each caregiver, child and family develop bonds of comfort, familiarity, trust and love. Meaningful connections between the CCSLV staff and each child's family and culture support the child's developing identity. Because we know these important connections are created through strong partnerships with families, we practice several strategies to build on these partnerships. We offer home visits, hold annual conferences and periodic meetings for family members. We organize potlucks and social events, plan family workdays, and have monthly meetings for our parent led board of directors, where all families are invited to participate. We strive to create mentoring relationships between families, and daily communication. Family artifacts and photos are also welcome in each of the children's classrooms.

As primary caregivers, we work together as a team within each classroom. An important aspect of that teamwork is to act as secondary caregivers for the children in our program. Having a familiar secondary caregiver to turn to when their primary caregiver is not available strengthens children's emotional security while in care.

Daily interchanges with familiar adults and children give the child's world a comforting and empowering predictability. Continuity of care facilitates a strong caregiver-child attachment, the development of trust, and diminishes separation and stranger anxieties. Physical closeness fosters both nonverbal and verbal communication between the teachers and the children, which is essential for the children's social development, language development, cognitive development, and, above all, their development of emotional security. Emotions are at the center of young children's experiences as they begin to make sense of who they are and what to expect from the world around them. When adults are responsive, young children feel emotionally secure and become confident in their ability to have an effect on the world.

Our primary caregiving assignments are always posted where both teachers and families can see them. We hope to get regular feedback and input from families regarding the needs of their individual children, and ideas for planning and goal setting.

CCSLV utilizes the *Primary Care* system so that each child in the program experiences all of the following:

CONTINUITY OF ONE RELATIONSHIP

Each child in our program will be assigned one primary caregiver if they come for a half-day shift. Some children, because they attend school for a full day, are assigned a separate morning and afternoon caregiver. Our goal is for children to experience as few primary caregivers as possible, including substitute caregivers, during any given day, within any given week, and over an extended period of time.

DAILY ROUTINES

Routines such as feeding and diapering are a fundamental aspect of the curriculum for toddlers. Done the PITC way, routines promote close, primary relationships and offer learning opportunities through responsive care based on each child's individual needs and interests.

GOOD-BYES

When teachers have to leave the room, they let each child know where they are going, when they will be back, and who will be available to provide care while they are gone. We ensure that our families do this as well. This communication helps children build trust in the adults and learn to expect respectful relationship with other people. This respectful, approach to the feelings of infants and toddlers exemplifies the PITC philosophy.

DIAPERING

Diaper changes are special times for a teacher and child to connect with each other, to learn about a child and strengthen a close relationship. Following PITC guidelines, the teacher who is the primary caregiver for a small group of children has responsibility for diapering each of them. If the primary caregiver is not available, the second caregiver in the room, whom the child already knows, will diaper the child. The secondary caregiver will first check with the primary caregiver before diapering and then will talk with the child during their experience. This respectful back and forth exchange during diaper changes helps young children to trust and understand what to expect in relationships.

MEALS

At CCSLV, children sit in child-sized chairs and eat all snacks and meals family style, helping to serve themselves and each other. To accommodate individual needs, Allergy lists are posted so that both primary and secondary caregivers are able to facilitate safe and healthy meals for each child.

SLEEPING

Dedicated nap spaces in each room allow children to sleep on their own. In the toddler room, there are quiet spaces children can use if they are sleepy. The nap room windows are low enough to allow caregivers to see napping children while seated on the floor with other children in the main indoor room.

TRANSITIONS

When a child is moved from one group to another, it is done so in a way that the child gets support from both old and new caregivers, as well as support to stay connected with peers. We strive to build as much continuity of care as possible, so that each child's peer relationships, adult and child relationships, and sense of overall connectedness are maintained.

OUR ENVIRONMENT

Both the indoor and outdoor environments provides children with comfortable, intimate spaces, a variety of choices, and freedom to explore. Our classrooms have direct access to outdoor spaces, which are utilized each day. Each of our yards offers safe, appropriate challenges for the age group for which it is designed.

ACCREDITATION BY THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN (NAEYC)

Our school is currently undergoing the re-accreditation process, as one of only nine Santa Cruz County early childhood programs to be accredited by the NAEYC. Accreditation standards ensure that we adhere to the twelve principles of developmentally appropriate practice as defined by the NAEYC; in regards to our environment, curriculum, teacher – child interactions, health and safety practices, and our administration.

NAEYC Principles

Developmentally appropriate practice is based on knowledge about how children develop and learn. The following is a list of observationally based principles of child development and learning, which inform and guide decisions about developmentally appropriate practice as defined by the NAEYC. These principals are the basis to our educational philosophy.

- 1. Domains of children's development - physical, social, emotional, and cognitive - are closely related. Development in one domain influences and is influenced by development in other domains.**

Recognition of the connections across developmental domains is used in curriculum planning. For example: Children use their sensory/motor skills to manipulate sand and water in the yard. They also use and learn new language to describe what they are experiencing. This language, in turn, influences their ability to establish and participate in social relationships both with other children and with adults. A positive sense of self and as competent learners begins to develop and be reinforced as they continue to expand on their physical, cognitive and social experiences creating castles, moats or tea parties in the sand box each day. This self-image is then stored as fond feelings and memories about the exploration of our earth's natural materials, the ability to create something useful through manipulation and practice, and the social relationships that form in the process of cooperation and team work.

- 2. Development occurs in a relatively orderly sequence. Later abilities, skills and knowledge are built on those already acquired.**

Knowledge of typical development of children within the age span served by the program provides a general framework to guide how teachers prepare the learning environment and plan realistic curriculum goals and objectives and appropriate experience. For example the children the in Toddler class are introduced to nature concepts like leaves, flowers, trees, etc. They touch, smell, and experience nature in its many different forms. They hear new words and learn simple nature songs. In the Toddler Plus class, children will hear more involved nature stories and learn more complex songs. They might make some of their own clay to manipulate out of different types of dirt. They might play a game of "what's missing" from a nature bag or find and label things in a feelie bag. They will practice measuring and counting with leaves, sand buckets or while pouring water.

- 3. Development progresses at varying rates from child to child. Development can also vary within different areas of an individual child's functioning.**

Recognition that individual variation is not only expected but also *valued* requires that decisions about curriculum and adults' interactions with children be as individualized as possible. Observation is key here. We have to learn what the child knows, what skills they have so that we know how to build upon them. We provide a wide variety of materials so that children can experience them at their own levels. We use books, toys, familiar objects, costumes, puzzles, games, and art materials that are open ended so that each child can be successful. We provide language experiences and music. We interact with children to supplement their knowledge. For example: a Toddler will play with blocks much differently than a Pre-K child, but both need the exposure and opportunity to manipulate, count, compare size and weight, and be creative with common classroom materials.

4. Early experiences have both short-term and long-term effects on an individual child's development. Optimal periods exist for certain types of development and learning.

Children's early experiences, either positive or negative, are cumulative in the sense that if an experience occurs occasionally, it may have minimal effects. If positive or negative experiences occur frequently, however, they can have powerful, lasting, even "snowballing" effects. For example: developing new friends, having conflicts and successfully resolving problems has a cumulative effect on children. As children become familiar and comfortable with feelings, they are able to develop a sense of ownership of their feelings, at their own developmental pace. As they grow, they are able to expand on their own feelings and empathize with others, because conflict and resolution opportunities were provided with consistency and inclusiveness in their earliest years.

5. Child development progresses in predictable directions toward greater complexity organization, and internalization.

Learning during early childhood proceeds from behavioral knowledge to symbolic or representational knowledge. Developmentally appropriate programs provide opportunities for children to broaden and deepen their behavioral knowledge by providing a variety of first-hand experiences and by helping children acquire symbolic knowledge through representing their experiences in a variety of media. For instance, most learning for early toddlers is sensory and motor, but by age 2 children use one object to stand for another in play (a block for a phone or a spoon for a guitar). We use hands-on activities and provide the medium for them to draw, paint, and construct models and props to do dramatic play as a way to internalize and organize new knowledge. We also take advantage of teachable moments during children's play to point out new concepts in building empathy or cognitive understandings.

6. Development and learning occur in and are influenced by a variety of social and cultural contexts.

Children's development is best understood within the socio-cultural context of the family, educational setting, community, and broader society. These various contexts are interrelated, and all have an impact on the developing child. Because we have families and staff with varying beliefs and cultural backgrounds, our teachers are sensitive to the varying customs, beliefs and behavior patterns of the families they serve. We do this through communication and partnership with families, taking time to get to know each family and learn about their values and how they feel about their child's experience at school. This communication fosters a consistent and cohesive integration of home and school, which allows each child to be secure enough to explore and learn.

7. Children are active learners. They need direct physical and social experience as well as culturally transmitted knowledge to build their own understanding of the world around them.

As children process new experiences, those experiences continually reshape, expand, and reorganize their cognitive structures. When teachers and other adults use various strategies to encourage children to reflect on their experiences by planning beforehand and "revisiting" afterward, the knowledge and understanding gained from the experience is deepened. For example, a teacher may expand curriculum around dried fruit that a child has brought in to share, and begin using a food de-hydrator to make a snack with the children. Next, the teacher may begin soliciting ideas of which types of foods the children want to dry. They can create charts where children record taste, texture and size, before and after drying. Teachers revisit experiences by reminding a child at snack time "Remember last summer when we put those plums you brought to school into the food dehydrator?"

- 8. A child's development and learning are a result of their biological maturation as well as their environment, and include the physical and social worlds that children live in.**

Development is viewed as the result of an interactive transactional process between the growing, changing individual and his or her experiences in the social and physical worlds. Observing a child and providing the enrichment and challenges they need on an individual basis is important. For example: When we see that a child loves music, we give that child many opportunities to hear different kinds of music to sing and dance to, and instruments to play. Teachers ask questions that provoke the children to think critically about music while they are experiencing the pleasures of listening, movement and balance on their own.

- 9. Play is an important vehicle for children's healthy social, emotional, and cognitive development. It also provides adults with a reflection of their development.**

Play gives children opportunities to understand their world, interact with others in social ways, express and understand emotions, and develop the ability to process information. It provides a context for children to develop and practice newly acquired skills, take on new social roles, attempt novel or challenging tasks, and solve complex problems. Child-initiated, teacher-supported play is an essential component of developmentally appropriate practice. For example, when children express an interest in trains, we can set up blocks, train tracks, train books, and other train materials for children to use. With these materials children build on their math skills (counting, replacing, problem solving), reading skills (making signs, reading train stories), social skills (taking turns, helping each other, listening to each other), and sense of self (self confidence, mastery of materials, creativity with materials).

- 10. Development advances when children have opportunities to practice newly acquired skills, and when they experience a challenge just beyond the level of their present mastery.**

Development and learning are dynamic processes requiring that adults understand the developmental learning continuum, observe children closely (to match curriculum and teaching to children's emerging competencies, needs and interests), and then help children move forward by targeting educational experiences to challenge but not frustrate them. For example, the teachers may introduce a sea animal theme at a circle time. The teachers then find many ways to bring sea animals further into the classroom through projects and play. While this happens, the teachers look for "teachable moments" or opportunities that happen spontaneously to challenge and promote knowledge, awareness and skill building around the aspects of ocean life the children are most interested in, and move children to more complex levels of understanding.

- 11. Children demonstrate different modes of knowing and learning, and different ways of representing what they know.**

Part of the teacher's job, with the families' help, is to start to recognize preferred modes of learning of each child and provide not only opportunities for individual children to use their preferred modes to capitalize on their strengths but also opportunities to help children develop in the modes in which they may not be strong. Different children learn in different ways, so the teachers will provide many ways for children to address specific issues.

- 12. Children develop and learn best in the context of a community where they are safe and valued, their physical needs are met, and they feel psychologically secure.**

We address children's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development. Our greatest goal is to provide a warm and nurturing environment in which each child knows he or she is loved and has a special place in the world and in our lives. We provide a safe environment that is both up to, and exceeding State Licensing requirements and NAEYC Accreditation standards. Our classrooms are welcoming and child friendly. We display children's art prominently. Our philosophy on discipline is to gently guide a child and provide a respectful model of positive behavior. We promote inclusiveness and community within the classrooms, and with our larger community.

OUR ANTI-BIAS PHILOSOPHY

We are committed to creating a learning environment where every child can develop a strong self-identity and sense of community, as well as an appreciation for participating in a diverse community. Children begin to notice differences at a very early age. We embrace an age-appropriate curriculum that makes every effort to reflect the diversity of our community and the larger world in a way that expresses complete respect for ethnicity, race, gender, age, socioeconomic class, body image, family structure, and physical ability. During the course of the year we strive to:

- Help children develop a sense of pride in their self-identity, family story / history and in their culture and heritage.
- Help children develop a knowledge of, language for and delight in human diversity.
- Help children develop an ability to recognize bias, stereotyping, oppression and injustice in themselves as well as in others.
- Help children (alone or with others; and on behalf of themselves and others) develop the ability to resist and challenge bias, stereotyping, oppression and injustice.

We do this by presenting children with a wide range of materials that reflect our differences and that challenge prevailing stereotypes of women, men, children, the elderly, of family structures, people with disabilities, working class and the poor, people of color and body images. We design circle time stories, art projects, and other classroom materials that encourage children to relate to people and diversity with respect and appreciation. We also find opportunities to model our values on celebrating diversity as they come up with the children in the classrooms. Lastly, we encourage our families to share their personal family cultures with the staff, and with the children - in collaboration with our teachers.

In all of our work with children, we begin with the premise that the role of the teacher is to help children explore their world in an open-minded and enquiring way. The teacher presents alternatives, asks thought-provoking questions, and gently guides children to think critically. We are happy to share our resources with you, and/or to discuss any ideas or questions you may have.