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The Golestan Colab Guide to Teaching

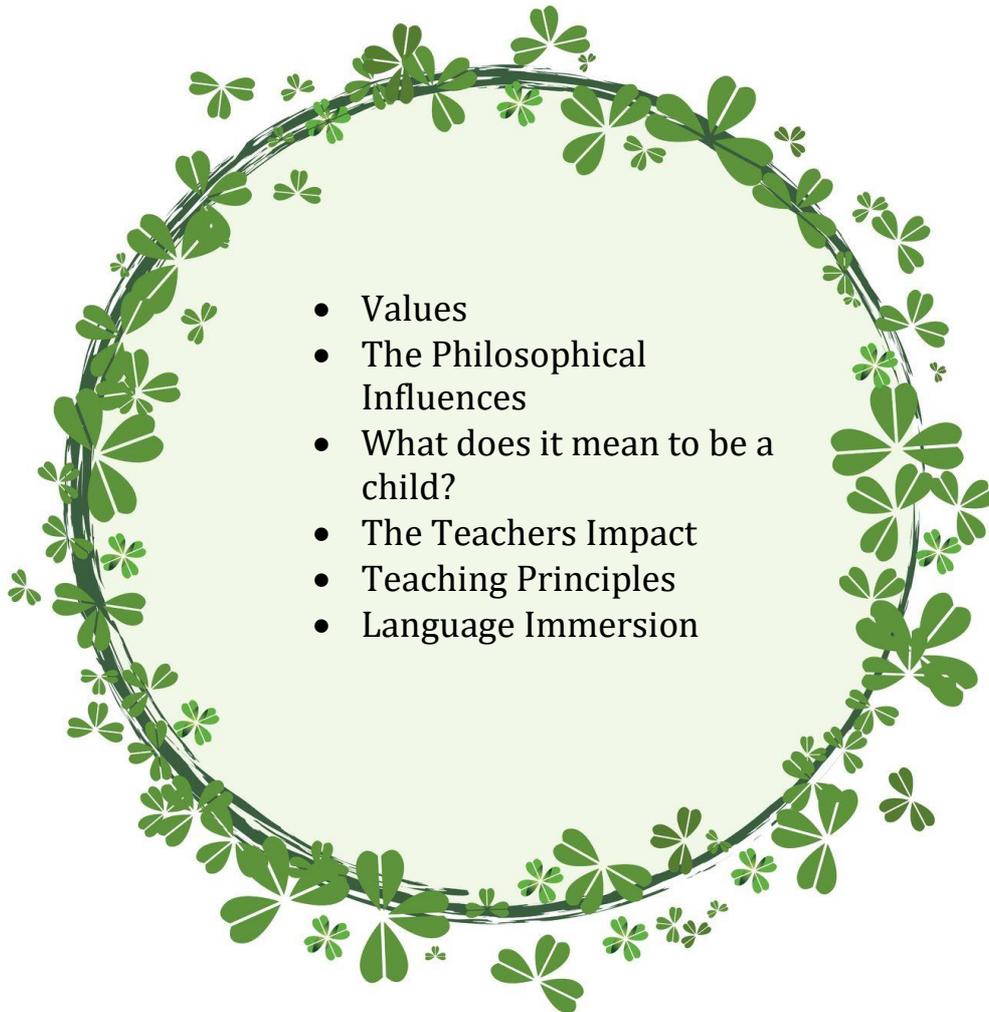


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Section 1:



- Values
- The Philosophical Influences
- What does it mean to be a child?
- The Teachers Impact
- Teaching Principles
- Language Immersion

Our Values

Golestan Colab works with communities across the country and around the world to help start new schools and establish best practices for quality progressive language immersion education. More recently, the Colab has been working with communities in underdeveloped countries to build schools for orphans and underprivileged children.

One of Golestan Colab's objective's is to share the knowledge and experience gained through research, study and most importantly years of experience working with children and running a school with other schools and educational institutions. The following document is perhaps one of the most important of these, as it contains practical guidelines for teachers to better work with children and to create a learning environment that manifests the following values:

We value:

- Nature,
 - Kindness,
 - Confidence,
 - Creativity,
 - Diligence,
 - Honesty,
 - Generosity,
 - Compassion,
 - Curiosity,
 - Altruism,
 - Dignity,
 - Responsibility,
 - Community.
- These are the values we teach the children by giving them the opportunity to develop them in a supportive and loving atmosphere, where the teachers themselves embody the very values we want to teach the children.
- To support the children's confidence, creativity, diligence, and curiosity, we apply heuristic – hands on – approach to teaching and a holistic approach to living.
- It is our hope that we will raise a community of confident, caring, and compassionate children that value the heritage culture while making a positive impact on the world.

The philosophical influences of the Golestan Methodology

Golestan applies a hybrid approach to education by borrowing from Waldorf, Montessori, and Reggio Emilia teaching philosophies. The Golestan ideology puts an emphasis on the role of nature, imagination and sensorial experiences.

Montessori

The Montessori approach to early childhood education not only teaches children how to fine-tune their fine motor and cognitive skills, but it also helps them develop a sense of independence. According to Montessori:

- Children take a natural pleasure in learning to master their environment; this mastery is the basis for a child developing independence.
- Real learning involves the ability to do things for oneself, not the passive reception of a body of knowledge.
- The child benefits from learning materials that are intrinsically interesting, real, and designed to facilitate self-correcting and the refinement of sensory perceptions.
- Imposing immobility and silence hampers children's learning – when given interesting and challenging work, children will establish their own order.

Reggio Emilia

The Reggio Emilia approach to teaching young children puts the natural development of children as well as the close relationships that they share with their environment at the center of its philosophy. The foundation of the Reggio Emilia approach lies in its unique view of the child. In this approach, there is a belief that:

- Children have rights and should be given opportunities to develop their full potential. "Influenced by this belief, the child is beheld as beautiful, powerful, competent, creative, curious, and full of potential and ambitious desires."
- The child is an active constructor of knowledge. Rather than being seen as the target of instruction, children are seen as having the active role of an apprentice. This role also extends to that of a researcher.
- Most instruction should take place in the form of projects where they have opportunities to lead, explore, observe, hypothesize, question, and discuss to clarify their understanding.
- Children are social beings and a focus is made on the child in relation to other children, the family, the teachers, and the community rather than on each child in isolation.

Waldorf

The Steiner Waldorf early childhood approach emphasizes the whole child, and the interdependence of physical, emotional, social, spiritual and cognitive development. The Waldorf philosophy believes that children's learning flourishes in a calm, peaceful, predictable, familiar and unhurried environment that recognizes the child's sensory feelings. Young children need to experience their world before they separate themselves from it and begin to analyze it in a detached way. A child's learning is as meaningful as its relevance to his/her life and should be integrated into daily household tasks. The learning experience of children under the age of seven is therefore integrated into everything they experience.



What does it mean to be a child?

Young children “think” through physical activity in that they get a better understanding of reality from direct physical experience. In play, by imitating the adult world, they practice necessary social, emotional and cognitive life skills. This is why **play is taken very seriously and used as a teaching tool**. Children play with their whole body and mind and use all their senses to develop a sense of their world.

A healthy rhythm promotes a healthy child. A consistent rhythm is just as important for a child’s cognitive and physical development as a consistent sleep or meal schedule. Children’s natural rhythm consists of contractions and expansions. After every mentally challenging activity they need a physical activity to maintain a healthy rhythm.

Everything in the world is new for children. **They learn about their world through repetition** – seeing the same thing every day. Regular patterns of activities create routine and foster a sense of security and self-confidence and help the child to know what to expect. An example of this is that children often ask to repeat the same stories – this helps them know what to expect, and renders this unknown world safer and more secure for them.

1. *Toddlers:*

The focus for two and three year olds is to teach:

- impulse control,
- kindness,
- sharing,
- listening and communication skills
- social skills
- self-help skills

All of these are learned in a warm and encouraging environment. Much of this they can learn through role play/free play.

<p><u>Physical Development</u> Walks well, goes up and down steps alone, runs, seats self on chair, becomes independent in toileting, uses spoon and fork, imitates circular stroke, turns pages singly, kicks ball, attempts to dress self, builds tower of six cubes.</p>	<p>Age 2</p>	<p><u>Social Development</u> Engages in solitary play, dependent on adult guidance, plays with dolls, refers to self by name, socially immature, has little concept of others as "people", responds to simple direction.</p>
<p><u>Emotional Development</u> Very self-centered, just beginning to have a sense of personal identity and belongings, possessive, often frustrated, no ability to choose between alternatives, enjoys physical affection, resistive to change, becomes independent, more responsive to humor and distraction than discipline or reason.</p>		<p><u>Intellectual Development</u> Says words, phrases and simple sentences, understands simple directions, identifies simple pictures, likes to look at books, has short attention span, avoids simple hazards, can do simple form board.</p>

Children, teachers, and parents collaborate in potty training to help transition out of diapers.

Singing songs and poems with creative movement helps children learn language while expressing themselves physically; they also develop an understanding of pitch, rhythm, and movement. Thus it is beneficial **to integrate music into the all of the toddler’s day and activities.**

2. Preschoolers:

Three to five year olds in the preschool program continue to develop social, empathetic, and impulse control skills in a fun, loving, and structured environment. At this age, they begin to participate in games and exercises designed to develop math and reading readiness.

<p><u>Physical Development</u> Runs well, marches, stands on one foot briefly, rides tricycle, imitates cross, feeds self well, puts on shoes and stockings, unbuttons and buttons, builds tower of 10 cubes, pours from pitcher.</p> <p><u>Emotional Development</u> Likes to conform, has easygoing attitude, not so resistive to change, more secure, greater sense of personal identity, begins to be adventuresome, enjoys music.</p>	<p>Age 3</p>	<p><u>Social Development</u> Engages in parallel play, enjoys being by others, takes turns, knows if he is a boy or girl, enjoys brief group activities requiring no skill, likes to "help" in small ways, responds to verbal guidance.</p> <p><u>Intellectual Development</u> Says short sentences, shows great growth in communication, tells simple stories, uses words as tools of thought, wants to understand environment, answers questions, imaginative, may recite few nursery rhymes</p>
<p><u>Physical Development</u> Skips on one foot, draws person, cuts with scissors (not well), can wash and dry face, dresses self, standing broad jump, throws ball overhand, has high motor drive.</p> <p><u>Emotional Development</u> Seems sure of self, displays out-of bounds behavior, often negative, may be defiant, tests self-abilities, needs controlled freedom.</p>	<p>Age 4</p>	<p><u>Social Development</u> Engages in cooperative play, enjoys other children's company, highly social, may play loosely organized group games – e.g. tag, talkative, versatile.</p> <p><u>Intellectual Development</u> Uses complete sentences, asks endless questions, learns to generalize, highly imaginative, dramatic, can draw recognizable simple objects.</p>
<p><u>Physical Development</u> Hops and skips, dresses without help, displays good balance and smoother muscle action, skates, rides wagon and scooter, prints simple letters, handedness established, ties shoes, (girls small muscle development about 1 year ahead of boys).</p> <p><u>Emotional Development</u> Self-assured, stable, well adjusted, home-centered, capable, of some self-criticism, enjoys responsibility, likes to follow the rules.</p>	<p>Age 5</p>	<p><u>Social Development</u> Engages in highly cooperative play, has special "friends", highly organized, enjoys simple table games requiring turns and observing rules, "school", feels pride in clothes and accomplishments, eager to carry out some responsibility.</p> <p><u>Intellectual Development</u> Tells long tales, carries out direction well, reads own name, asks meaning of words, knows colors, begins to know difference between fact and fiction-lying, interested in environment, city, stores, etc.</p>

In Math, the focus is on number skills: recognition of numbers from 1-20 in the Heritage Language and English, concepts of quantity, and basic arithmetic. The children learn to count to 100 in both languages, though emphasis is made on Heritage Language. Recognition of shapes, colors and patterns also form the framework for more advanced mathematical skills. Calendar exercises reinforce counting and numbers, and provide a link to science topics through discussions of weather and seasons.

Children can receive an introduction to phonics through stories, poems, and simple exercises on a daily basis. This is time when children can learn correct, comfortable writing and drawing positions and practice writing their names and letters in both the Latin and the Heritage Language alphabet.

By participating in these activities, students are honing their fine and gross motor skills, learning how to follow directions, and how to work independently. These older preschoolers develop a sense of responsibility for their peers, space, and belongings, while becoming increasingly respectful of others and learning to be self-sufficient.

Music and art are great means of learning and therefore can continue to be a central means of teaching language, math, science, and social sciences in the preschool class.

3. Grade schoolers (After-school and summer camp):

Six to twelve year olds in the after-school program participate in an array of activities which center around collaboration, respect for others, and independent thinking. While working cooperatively with their peers, they spend time learning to read and write, knit, yoga, crafts, hiking, ceramics, poetry, gardening, music, storytelling, games, sports, community service, painting, theater, cooking – to name a few.

Emphasis on the reuse of materials and creative applications for everyday objects helps foster innovation and a sense of responsibility towards the environment. The after-school/summer camp programs for grade schoolers is structured very much like the preschool program in which the guiding principles and monthly themes enable the teachers to provide an engaging and relevant enrichment program by which the children not only master heritage language skills, but they maintain and further develop a positive value system and work ethic.

The richness of the experience is in the journey itself there for

Projects are never product driven – they are always process driven.



Practical life activities such as sorting, pouring, and manipulating are important for the children's fine motor development. The use of different media (water colors, tempera, collage, pastels, etc.) – with the freedom to fully explore each of them without restriction – not only nurtures their creativity, but also acts as a release for pent up energy or angst.

Children need structure and rhythm to feel secure and to thrive and learn thus it is best if the environment is structured, while the children are completely free within that structure. This structure should follow the children's natural rhythm so that they are able to thrive to their fullest potential.

Teacher's Impact

A healthy, balanced and happy teacher will have a healthy, balanced and happy class. In the first six+ years of their lives, children learn mostly through imitation. Imitation is one of the most effective and natural means of learning at this age. Thus, if teachers perform their tasks consciously and carefully, they will be models worthy of imitation.

A child's strong instinct for imitation can be one of the biggest challenges early childhood educators face in their classrooms. Once the teacher fully embraces this, it can become the most useful tool for education. For example, if the teacher walks on the stairs slowly and with patience - with a straight back and a calm voice - the rest of the line will follow suit. Likewise, if the teacher takes a deep breath before reacting to things, children will do the same when facing similar situations.

If we speak to children with truth, kindness, and respect they will not only respond to us in kind but they will also begin to internalize these qualities.

The way the teacher talks to children is the way the children will talk to their teachers and fellow classmates. If a teacher speaks in a low volume, the children will respond in kind.

When a teacher is able to genuinely see the world from each child's perspective, then s/he is able to truly respect the child. When a teacher is able to truly respect each child, the class is more likely to be balanced and in harmony.

An easy way to lower a child's volume is to start singing or whispering.

Teaching Principles

1. Respecting children's space and temperaments

Respect for mental space gives the opportunity for a child to adapt himself/herself to his/her environment and learn at his/her own pace. This enables the child to be more confident to explore and fully express his/her creativity.

Each child has his/her unique way of learning, addressing conflict, and dealing with transitions. By taking this into account when dealing with each situation - each child can be given the space and guidance needed to facilitate this self-education process.

Respect for physical space enables a child to define his/her own personal space while helping him/her respect other people's physical boundaries. While offering open arms for a hug helps a child feel loved and secure, disrespecting personal boundaries with forceful affection and an excess of physical expression can be upsetting and disrespectful. There is a very fine line between *auntie/uncle* love and *teacher* love - this can be very confusing, especially for young children. By the same token, while it is okay to kiss a child when s/he is

open and receptive to it when greeting or comforting, it is best to kiss her/him on the top of her/his head or forehead.

Respect for different temperaments allows the teacher to have an equal tolerance for every child and to set aside personal emotions when leading the class. Regardless of temperament, all children need to be treated fairly and equally regardless of the teacher's temperament or preferences.

A skilled teacher maintains a keen awareness of each child's temperament so that s/he may make decisions to help meet the child's needs and help the child become confident and thrive.

Respect for a child's dignity is important for supporting respect and healthy self-esteem. Feeling humiliated can be detrimental to a child's self-confidence and sense of self-worth. Being discreet when talking to a child ensures that the child does not feel humiliated. Therefore if a child misbehaves, it is best not to discuss or reprimand him/her in front of the other classmates. Whenever possible, one tries to imagine what it would feel like to do something wrong and how one would want to be treated if one was in the child's situation.

2. Supporting Good Decisions

Supporting good decisions enables a child to feel secure and less anxious about too having too many choices, or not being able to make the one that's more appealing at that moment. It also helps the teacher guide the child away from making choices that aren't in the child's best interest. For example, one may notice that it's cold outside and the child needs to wear a jacket. Instead of saying: "*it might be cold outside, do you want to wear your jackets?*" one can say: "*You can wear your jacket because it's cold outside.*" There are two benefits to this scenario; 1) providing the child the opportunity to make a good decision 2) reducing the child's anxiety over having to make a difficult decision between what's good for him/her and the desire not to wear a jacket. This also minimizes conflict between the child and the teacher and the teacher is more likely to efficiently and effectively help the child go outside with minimal resistance.

3. Consistency

Consistency is the root of each child's sense of security. When the world is consistent and predictable, a child knows what to expect and how to operate in it. If unpredictable and inconsistent, a child will become unpredictable and agitated.

4. Repetition

Repetition is the key to learning for children. This is not just related to academics – it also applies to learning teachers' expectations and school rules. Since most children are experiential learners, repetition and consistency in actions and responses gives meaning to the children's experiences and helps them make good choices. For example, if a child that disrupts the line going from one place to another during transitions is (gently and subtly – without any dialogue) taken to the end of the line *every* time, s/he will **learn to control those impulses much faster if the result is consistently the same each time** s/he is disruptive.

5. Rewarding

Rewarding can come in many different forms and can be effective when done thoughtfully. **Rewarding a child with tangible items or prizes, conditions a child to work or behave only for the reward.** The same applies to giving conditional privileges: “if you do x, you can do y.” Just as it is undesirable to condition a child to act only out of the desire for a prize it is equally unhealthy to condition a child to act in a certain way out by using threats for example “if you do x, you will *lose* y”. One can, however, say “I’m really looking forward to telling your mother about the good choices you made today.”

It is most important to teach the children to make good choices.

When children are able to make good choices, the class is harmonious and they are better able to focus and learn.

Collective positive consequences with a collective outcome can be an effective means of motivating children to make good choices (see below in section 6: Counting)

6. Counting

Counting can be used in a variety of methods to help a child make good choices. Some methods for using counting are:

- If a child is disruptive or not listening to a request, the teacher can *slowly count to three out loud* to give him/her the chance to listen. “Please come here – 1 ... 2 ... 3” Note, there should be *at least* 2 seconds between each number.
- When a child is upset or having a tantrum, the teacher can help him/her take **10 deep breaths**.
- Teachers can use Positive **1, 2, 3 Magic** to help the children develop a **shared** sense of responsibility. This method is used to address specific issues or meet specific goals for the entire class – such as reducing the amount of English spoken in the classroom – all consequences are positive, non-tangible, and shared by all the children in the class (like a pajama party, for example).

7. Praising

Like rewarding, **praising** can be effective if done thoughtfully. If the praise a child receives is accompanied by a lot of emotional expression, animation and flattery, it puts too much emphasis on the praise and can condition the child to act or work only for the praise. Thus **praising** a child is most effective when done discretely and softly without too much emotional expression. Effective praise is validating, not flattering. By the same token a child should not be praised for doing what is expected of him/her, rather, his/her efforts should be validated.

Validating is more effective than praising.

Not effective: “Good job! You cleaned up after yourself!”

Effective: “I saw you carry those heavy blocks back to the shelf. I appreciate your hard

When praising a child - speaking loudly or publicly not only disrupts the other children's concentration, but it also stimulates the other children's desire for attention or praise. Therefore it is best to get close to the child and offer a gentle praise.

On (**rare**) occasion, it can be very effective to **praise a child for** a particular outcome one would like **the rest of the children to emulate**. In this scenario, one wouldn't say, "look at how well x cleaned up the play area" – one can, however, *gently* say (but loud enough for other kids to hear) "I saw there were many toys to be picked up. Thank you for cleaning up the area so nicely." When the other children hear this, they are likely to follow suit. When they are done, one can gently tell the class "thank you for helping each other clean up your classroom." Again, one is not overly animated in this scenario, especially if the children are completing a task that is expected of them.

Praise does not always need to be expressed verbally; often, a look, a smile, or a *little* unexpected expression of warmth or affection can have infinitely more impact.



If using a marble/jar the teacher can discretely drop a marble in the jar when s/he knows it will get noticed, without explicitly bringing attention to it. S/he would never say "I'm putting a marble in here because..."

Once the jar is full, the children can celebrate with a special party, field trip, or activity. Parties, trips and activities are suitable because they are not tangible prizes or "things" Tangible rewards like stickers will create conditional behavior.

While subtly praising good behavior can boost a child's confidence and help him/her make good choices, praising a child's final work has the opposite effect and has the potential to *reduce* a child's confidence. Most children create for the actual experience, not the final outcome. Giving an opinion about their work makes them more concerned about the product, thereby hampering their creativity. It also decreases the likelihood that they will take risks in trying new things because they will be more likely to try to recreate the work that was praised. By extension, if one child's work is praised, all the other children will want *their* work to be praised, which can be disruptive while creating a sense of competition in the classroom. Ultimately, this hampers a child's self-esteem as well as his/her sense of collaboration, diligence, creativity, and risk taking. It is also disruptive to a calm and focused classroom.

8. Speaking to Children

Using respectful terms like "please," and "thank you" and the formal "you" with children will set an example that they will emulate. If we teach by example, children will learn to be respectful and compassionate with others.

A child learns through observing and emulating the behavior of those around him/her. In order to instill habits of respect and consideration, teachers can prompt children to say

please and thank you, when they forget. – If their tone becomes whiny or disrespectful (to the teacher or another child), the teacher can bring it to their attention. For younger children the teacher can *repeat it in a calm and respectful way*, they will most likely repeat after her/him - otherwise the teacher can kindly ask them to do so. For older children the teacher can *have them repeat themselves in the proper tone*. There are many ways to improve a child's tone (whether it is a reaction to anger, fatigue, hunger, etc) and it is up to the teacher to find a respectful and appropriate way to redirect the child positively.

Children are more likely to lie if they realize that adults have not been honest with them. **In order to instill strength of character and honesty in a child it is imperative that teachers always tell the truth.** The children must know that nothing is as offensive as not telling the truth. To do this, one can lead by example. For example, if a child is curious to know what a teacher said to another student, the teacher can kindly say that they are having a private conversation, and encourage the child to continue with his/her own work. By the same token, if a parent asks if a child has had a good day, the teacher wouldn't say "yes" if this is not true. Instead, s/he can say, "she had a great morning; tomorrow we will work on having a better afternoon."

By extension, having a child participate in deceptive behavior, will confuse him/her and send the wrong message. For example, one wouldn't tell a child "this is our secret" or "shhh, just for you." These teach children deception rather than honesty and transparency. It also weakens the child's communication with his/her parents if they feel they cannot share something with them, even if the teacher did not specifically ask a child not to share something with his/her parents.

Just as we want the children to learn not to interrupt people, we should not interrupt a child when speaking – even if only to help them formulate their sentences or finish their thoughts. By not finishing sentences for the children we show them respect and also empower them to speak for themselves.

Giving excuses or justifications for a child's actions teaches them not to accept responsibility for their actions "I know you didn't mean to take this, you thought it was yours..." In this scenario, the teacher is helping a child make excuses, while not owning up to their actions or reflecting on their behavior. This may also be teaching them to tell untruths, especially if the statement does not reflect what the child was actually feeling. If we want the children to *learn to communicate*, we must *give them the opportunity* to do so independently.

By not whispering in anyone's ear – one teaches the children that it is unkind to whisper to each other in the presence of other people.

9. Dealing with Disruptive Behavior

When dealing with misbehavior, **for most children, simply removing them from a situation and sitting quietly will help them reset.** This is especially true when a child is having trouble controlling his/her impulses. There is no need to speak in this scenario. The child already knows what s/he's done wrong and feels badly about it. Talking about it will only make the child feel worst, especially in the heat of the moment when s/he isn't able to process what is being said.

If the child repeats the behavior after rejoining the class, the teacher can then gently and discreetly remove the child from the situation again. This scenario can be repeated times until the child tires of this process and starts to show more impulse control. Giving a lot of attention to the child during these periods outside the classroom, can result in 1) the child will not have a chance to calm down and reflect 2) the child may want to be taken outside of the classroom to receive attention from his/her teacher. 2) The child tuning out entirely to what is being said. In these scenarios one can simply go to a quiet place together with the child – without making eye contact – without talking. Once a reasonable amount of time has passed and the child seems ready to return, one can say: “are you ready to return?” Minimizing dialogue makes this technique effective – if one must talk, one can keep the message brief yet meaningful. The more one talks, the more likely a child is to tune you out.

Time outs are at minimum an ineffective method of disciplining children. Time outs:

1. Are a form of punishment based on the threat/ fear of abandonment.
2. Lower a child's self-esteem, as do methods like having a child stand in a corner.
3. Do not teach a child to evaluate their behavior and self-regulate.

Children should have a clear understanding of our expectations of them and especially why we have these expectations. If they do not meet these expectations, they are reminded. If they do not respond to the reminder, then they can be (discreetly) taken aside to discuss the consequences of continuing their behavior.

Consequences should be meaningful, not cruel. A child will know that not being able to enjoy a privilege may be the natural consequence of a particular behavior. For example a child is being loud, boisterous and disruptive during project time. The natural consequence of this behavior is that s/he will not be able to participate in the project because his/her action is negatively affecting the project. What would not be acceptable is to tell the child that because of her/his behavior s/he won't be allowed to go to the yard to play. The child can also be given the opportunity to decide her/his own fate “please come and sit next to me. This way you can calm down and will be able to continue your project”. **Of utmost importance is that teachers follow through with any strategy they use.**

There are some situations where an alternate approach is more effective. If one knows there are special circumstances that led to the child's actions (chronic sleep deprivation, conflict between parents at home, recent travel, houseguests, a shortage of quality time with a parent, a new sibling, a new home etc.), one can use one's best judgment to address the situation. For example, if a child is acting out because of a need for attention, the teacher might hold the child closely – praise him/her for her qualities (“you're so kind”

“you’re very hard working” etc.) - once the teacher senses the child has settled down and has been reset, s/he asks the child if s/he’s ready to return to join his/her friends. If a child is having a challenging day and the teacher thinks it’s best to keep him/her with her, s/he can tell the child that she’d love it if s/he could give you some help in cleaning up the classroom.

Language Immersion

The following section is suitable for language immersion schools. The advice given here is based on the premise that the language the children will be immersed in is a heritage language other than English. However the concepts presented would apply to a language immersion school where English is the secondary language the children are learning

Speaking in a language other than the Heritage language (e.g. English), gives children the message that they can revert to English whenever they’re stuck for words or cannot communicate in the heritage language. By that token unless in an emergency or translating, one should refrain from speaking in English – even to children who do not speak the heritage language. The effectiveness of a language immersion program lies in the children only hearing and communicating in the heritage language. Mixing languages will dilute from the effectiveness of the immersion and also send the message that it is ok to speak in both languages.

- If a teacher blanks on a word, s/he can try asking the kids if they know how to say it in the heritage language (in this context, it’s okay to use the English word).
- If a child does not understand what the teacher is saying and the teacher isn’t unable to communicate non-verbally using body language, the teacher can use the sandwich method: “een aabeeyeh” “this is blue” “een aabeeyeh” --- then s/he can have the child repeat what s/he said.
- If a child speaks to a teacher in English, the teacher can have them repeat the sentence back in heritage language before s/he responds to them. In this scenario if a child is constantly told to talk in the heritage language example “say it in Spanish” “say it in farsi’... the child will be over sensitized and push back. *The teacher can repeat the sentence in the heritage language exactly as they would need to say it.* This is tedious and painful, but will very quickly yield positive results if done *consistently*.

If we speak correctly with the children, they will learn to speak their heritage language properly by that token it is best to use proper language when speaking to children. Also talking to children in baby talk, does not allow them to develop proper speaking and listening skills.

For school-aged children: Once children start going to school, they spend most of their day in setting immersed in a language other than Persian. Some children go to other language immersion programs (French, Spanish, Mandarin), while some are in an English language setting. Many of the Golestan after school students only attend our program one or two days a week. As a result, their tendency/desire to switch to the English language is pronounced. The challenge of keeping a fully immersed environment in the heritage language much harder as the children age and/or their attendance decreases.

Here are some extra ideas in addition to the ones included in this handbook on maintaining the language immersion environment and helping the children to speak the heritage language while at your school:

- The more engaging the activities the more likely the children will be to engage in the heritage language. Especially with the older children, it is important to understand what their interests are and to design projects and lessons that are more likely to get them excited and keep them engaged.
- Children will have a tendency to revert to English with each other when not engaged by a teacher – especially in free-play or projects that require less teacher direction. Therefore, contrary to preschool students, it is important that teachers are physically and mentally present to keep the kids engaged the entire time they are at the school. This is obviously not sustainable or healthy in a full time program, nor is it necessary. But for part time or sporadic programs (once a week) it is critical for full language immersion.
- As with younger kids, reminders to “speak Persian” (or whatever your heritage language may be) can backfire. Constant reminders only help to increase a child’s frustration, while playful or subtle redirection is more likely to help engage and motivate the children.
- Since the older children are able to read, we recommend removing as many English language books and visual cues around the classroom as possible. Heritage language books are now much more important to have around than in the preschool years.



SECTION 2:



General Class Environment:

The main shared goal among all the classes is to have **happy and engaged** children. To achieve this goal, it is important to respect the individuality of each child and create a collaborative relationship with them. It is most effective to try to see the child's perspective and deal with each situation on a case-by-case basis. If confronted with an uncomfortable situation, teachers pick their battles wisely, evaluate the priorities and overarching goals, and focus on attaining them.

It is through teaching children to share that we teach them altruism and generosity. By that token the **culture of sharing** is to be encouraged at all times within the classroom and between classes. If a child refuses to share something, the teacher can remind him/her that things in the school belong to the school and everybody has the right to use them when it's their turn. A child can be encouraged to share by telling them that when their turn is done in x number of minutes, it will be their friend's turn to use it. Teachers can use a sand timer to help the child know when his/her turn is over.

A joyful school environment can be kept alive in the classroom through singing (softly), acting with love and kindness and creating a harmonious environment. It is in a free but structured setting that children feel they are in a positive space and can bring out their creativity. Each child will create according to his/her senses, experiences and perception of life given his/her abilities in fine motor skills and connection with physical body.

Consistency in class rules, rhythms and time frames help children feel secure and allows them to learn better. A classroom that has a home-like feeling where teachers and children work together with respect for each other and love for one another enriches the learning experience. A teacher, who acts with compassion and kindness, fosters kind and compassionate children.

Kindness is the act or the state of being kind, being marked by good and charitable behavior, pleasant disposition, and concern for others. It is known as a virtue, and recognized as a value in many cultures and religions. Research has shown that acts of kindness do not only benefit receivers of the kind act, but also the giver, as a result of the release of neurotransmitters responsible for feelings of contentment and relaxation when such acts are committed.
(From Wikipedia)

Class Management

1. Lesson Plan:

Focusing on the end product of a project or lesson, can take away from the child's enjoyment of the process. Furthermore when the final project is emphasized the child's creativity and confidence to explore and learn through the process is hampered. When writing lesson plans, thinking about what the children are going to experience and learn during a project rather than what they are going to make, will help to create a more meaningful and process oriented approach to learning.

If a lesson plan is not successful in engaging most of the children – the teacher can switch it up by either introducing a new project or changing the setting (introduce a new material or challenge, change rooms, play music, tell a story etc.). It is best to always have pre-planned backup activities readily available. These can be foreseen and included in the weekly lesson plans.

Writing as many details in lesson plans as possible helps enrich the lessons, and also make them easier to refer to in the future. Including a weekly note that summarizes the outcome of the lesson plan for that week (e.g. “next time we’ll use tempera paint because water colors weren’t bright enough on the paper.”) is a great means of perfecting lesson plans over time based on practical experiences.

Process vs. Product:

One of our guiding philosophies is that projects are all *process* driven, not product driven. This means that:

- Projects are not chosen based on what the final product will be but what kids will learn in the process. *For example an art project will not be chosen because the end product looks beautiful or relates to the lesson's theme, but rather based on what you want the child to learn and how s/he is best able to learn it.*
- Lesson planning begins with reflection on what our goals are for the month – what do we want the children to have learned – then the building blocks toward that end are laid out to define *how* they will learn it.

The reason for focusing on the process versus the final product is that it is the actual *practice* of creating and experimentation that enables the true learning – the magic – to occur. When the focus is on the product, children's creativity is inhibited because they are less likely to take risks out of the desire to want the outcome to “look good”, or come out “right.” It creates internal and at times external judgment on their work. They will look at what others are doing and want to copy them, or they will create what they think the teachers or their friends will admire most. Or they will think that there is only “one” right way of doing something. Likewise, it will inhibit them from being completely immersed in their work – we have found that experiential learning much more effective in both engaging the child *and* retention of the information they are being presented. It also promotes creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, and executive function skills.

Examples of product vs. process *thought processes*:

Scenario 1: *Let's make cream puffs with the kids. They love desserts. It is an engaging and fun activity. And it relates to the theme of the month ("the five senses") because they will use their senses to cook/eat them. (Product driven)*

Scenario 2: *This month we want the kids to learn about Air. They need a project that lets them experiment with different ingredients/materials to learn about how air affects the cooking process of the foods we eat. Let's find something we can make that will help the children observe and learn how it works. (Process driven)*

Note it is the thought process through which we arrive at each project which matters. In the above example, making cream puffs can in fact be a *process* driven project if the sequence of the lesson planning is different:

This week we are learning about Air and how it can transform or affect other materials like making iron rust or changing the texture and consistency of cream. We can show the effect of air in cooking: like making cream puffs. The pastry puffs up as the water in the dough evaporates and becomes airborne, while the cream goes from a liquid to a solid because the air molecules bind to the fat in the liquid cream as it is beaten. In this scenario, the children can experiment with both and actually observe (and taste) the outcome!

2. Projects:

In line with the *process, not project* driven approach, the children's projects should promote their individual self-expression, not (for example) something they color in a pre-cut template. When a child is given a model for his/her work, it serves as inspiration, not an obligatory means to an end product. It is up to the child to interpret the materials and models (if applicable) and create what they want with it. **There is a problem if at the end of a project all of the children's work looks the same.**

If children are given worksheets or asked to color within the lines, their self-expression and individuality is suppressed. On occasion, older children can be given "Doodle" sheets to work on. These can be colored, if the child chooses to, but teachers do not encourage the children to stay within the lines. In fact, teachers should encourage the children to go *outside* the lines and fill in the white space on the page.

3. Smocks or aprons:

Having a routine that incorporates putting on the aprons will minimize any conflict that may arise in getting the children to wear them. Smocks or aprons can be available for the children whenever they need them. In fact, it is best to create a routine for the children to put them on prior to starting any messy project. The purpose for this is mostly for the parents' sake. It can be frustrating for them to have to deal with stained clothing on a daily basis. That said, it is imperative that a child's creativity or freedom of expression not be hindered by the fear of getting dirty.

While a dirty child is an indication of activity and exploration, all children should have clean faces and hands whenever they are not engaged in the messy activity.
A supply of warm wet washcloths on a tray close by is a quick and easy way to clean up a child after a messy activity.

4. Clean Up:

If children put away toys from one activity before moving on to the next one, not only will this keep the class tidy, but will also teach them to take responsibility for their space and keep it tidy. For preschoolers, making the clean-up process a game (while singing the cleanup song) can help to engage all children in the process. One should be sure to leave enough time for this process. If cleanup time is rushed, it won't be viewed as a fun and fulfilling activity. Toys are live objects for children and taking care of them is a very motivating game for them. For example, one can ask a child to put the babies (dolls) to sleep so they can get some rest before playing with other kids. Or one can ask another child to clean up the kitchenette so that the next chef can cook a good meal for his friend.

Setting up a specific place and order for children to leave their tools after each project helps the cleanup process. A big tray and cup can be good places for them to leave their little trays and paintbrushes. If the teacher-student ratio is low, it is possible to divide the children into two groups in case they want to help in cleaning up the project with one of the teachers before leaving the class. It is good to make sure to always use this help as a positive opportunity for the child to spend quality time with his/her teacher and never as a negative consequence of a child's misbehavior. If a child is having a challenging day and the teacher think it's best to keep the child with her/him, s/he can tell the child that they s/he'd love it if s/he could give her some help in cleaning up the classroom.

Whenever possible, kids should help with cleanup, set up, projects etc. Its okay if they get dirty or a process slows down, as long as they're learning and participating.

Children should feel they are an integral part of the system – not that the system serves them but that we all serve it.

5. Bringing Toys to School:

When children bring toys from home it can be a source of distraction and conflict thus it is best if they are not be allowed to bring their personal toys to school; however, there are some exceptions. Especially for younger children there can be days when it is very difficult for them to detach themselves from a toy.

If a teacher recognizes that the child is particularly anxious about separating from a toy or belonging s/he can use one of the following approaches:

1. Offer/ask the toddler to leave the toy with his/her parents so that it can "rest" or
2. Let the child calm down after the parents leave and then offer to put the toy to sleep in the cubby.

3. As a last-case-scenario, let the child bring the toy to class until s/he settles down, then discretely offer to put it in his/her cubby; do not take it back out until it's time to go home.

Sometimes children find interesting things on their trips or out in nature, or want to share something related to their heritage or family life – In this scenario, their reason for bringing the item is explicitly for sharing with their teacher and classmates. If possible, the teacher can ask the parents to give them the object directly so that the teacher may decide if/when is the appropriate time to share the item in class.

4. Circle Time:

Circle time is a perfect teaching opportunity. Not just for theme related lesson plans, but for introducing current challenges. If, for example, in June (Monthly theme: wild animals) there is a child in the class that is having trouble sharing, the teacher can tell a story about a tiger that didn't share and how all the animals decided to share their things with her but ultimately wouldn't play with her when she wouldn't share...

5. Learning Opportunities:

Learning opportunities come in many shapes and forms. In fact, everything can be turned into a learning opportunity. This approach can help teachers make light of challenging conditions – in every situation, it is good to ask “what does this child need to learn from this situation and how can I teach it to him/her (with kindness)?”

6. Hurting (hitting etc):

When witnessing a child hurting someone (either physically or emotionally), it is important to set aside all judgment and **give attention to the child that was hurt**. If the attention is given to the other child (the one who hurt other) s/he will be conditioned to repeat that behavior in order to get attention, because even negative attention is attention. Once the child has been soothed, the teacher can then turn to the other child and explain that hitting/yelling/biting/kicking (etc) is not a good tool to resolve conflicts – s/he must use his/her words. Since a teacher does not always know what has happened or the reasons for the actions, it is best not to take sides or to make any assumptions about what happened or what the children are feeling. Other than expressing the need to use words to communicate, it is best if the teacher remains neutral.

One never knows what happened to lead to the current situation – like, for example, if the children had an argument the day before or are resolving personal challenges. In this scenario, the teacher's role is to teach what are the appropriate means of expressing feelings or resolving conflicts and to facilitate independent discussion and conflict resolution using words. A peace table or designated area in the classroom can help the children learn to communicate properly and peacefully. Speaking for a child and to putting words in a child's mouth will not allow children to learn to resolve their issues independently

Children often hit out of frustration – either because they can't communicate effectively, feel frustrated over a perceived injustice or an unmet need/want, or lose control over their impulses due to various possible extraneous factors (sleep deprivation, low/high blood

glucose levels, too much screen time/not enough physical activity). It is important that a teacher recognizes why a child is acting aggressively and so that s/he can deal with it in a firm, but empathetic way that is appropriate for the child's age and circumstances.

By that token when a toddler hits another one, one should first distinguish whether it happened because of a low impulse control or on purpose. If it's because of a low impulse control, one can try to keep that child entertained with a relaxing activity. If it's out of anger, first it is best to make sure the child who has been hit is OK and then separate the other child from the game, keeping him/her close to one until one feels he/she has gotten the message.

If an older child hurts another, the teacher can ask them how they would feel if this were to happen to them. What would they want a person to do if this were to happen to them? If a child apologizes for an action, it is best to have them explain what they are apologizing for. A simple "I'm sorry" can become meaningless unless there is a context associated with it.

Discouraging any "tattling" will empower children to learn to resolve their issues together. Therefore if there is a conflict between two children, the teacher can help them to resolve it together. For example "y just hit me" "please tell y 'please don't hit me – next time you can tell him/her yourself." It is beneficial to take the two children aside to resolve their conflicts in a safe and neutral place.

7. Transitions:

For most children, transitions take a lot of mental and physical effort, which can lead to chaos in the classroom and disruption to other classes.

A smooth transition involves controlled and seamless movement from one activity to the next activity

For preschoolers, when transitions are an interesting but calming game that engages both the mind and the body, they are more likely to maintain their equilibrium and stay on course - for example, the children moving from one room to another while mirroring the teacher's song and movements. An effective practice is to always have a teacher at the head of the line and another teacher at the end. The teacher in the front is responsible for raising engagement by choosing a song and using accompanying body movements, calmly but with enthusiasm. The teacher in the back ensures that children are following the head teacher. If a child is disrupting the order, the teacher in the back can gently (without dialogue) move the child's position in line to the back (in front of her/him) without affecting the rhythm of the rest of the class. This method works for moving from place to place, changing activities, putting on aprons or basically any transition other than descending/ascending stairs where hands need to be free to hold on to the handle.

For children of any age, transitions flow easier when they can anticipate the upcoming change in activity/location. A three to five minute reminder can help the children prepare for the upcoming transition. For younger children (preschool), time is more arbitrary – after the three or five minute reminder has been articulated, the teacher can determine when the

exact right time is to move on to the next activity based on the class' energy and level of preparedness. For older children that are able to tell time, it is important to be consistent.

To maintain safety it is important to always remind the children to walk while inside the building- **no running inside** and also abstain from gathering or socializing in the restrooms.

8. Class Keeping:

Children feel safest when they are familiar with their environment and their memory skills and sense of space develop when they find everything always in its place by that token it is best to set a specific place for everything so children can grow independent picking their desired toys from their usual place. By having a specific place for everything children will also learn a lot faster how to clean up the classroom and put things in their place. This benefits not only the children but also other teachers that are going to use that space afterwards. As a backup plan, teachers can have the option of having a class keeping activity. Children can help in cleaning the chairs, tables, walls or even reorganizing the closets and toys.

The smallest objects can be very stimulating for children so they don't need much to bring out their creativity. Therefore when setting a class or a project, one can **use the philosophy that less is more.** In fact, having less puts them in a situation where they have to find more uses for every object and use their creativity. **The same philosophy applies for projects; a minimum amount of paint keeps the class clean and the child aware of how much to use.** For play dough, a marble sized ball should do enough so that children can work on their fine motor skills.

The simpler and relatively undefined a toy is the more stimulating it will be to their imaginations and the more it will enable investigation, exploration, and discovery.

In the free play area, having a minimum amount of toys encourages children to create their own world using the small amount of multifunctional objects that are provided for them. The children must be given a lot of opportunity to pretend play – this is where they act out their observations of life and integrate their imagination and fantasy to recreate situations they've observed or experienced – much of this occurs in a social setting and lays the groundwork for social healthy development, communication, and conflict resolution.

If everyone does better, everyone does better. So if one leaves the class better than one received it for the next teacher, the next teacher will do the same, if not more, for the teacher after.

SECTION 3:



- Children's pick up and off times
- Outdoor time
- Family style meals
- Communication
- Finding a substitute
- Visitors

Children's Pick-up and Drop-off time:

Morning drop offs are a sensitive transition time. During this time teachers can try to make the transition calmly, inviting the child to come to them instead of going to the child. It takes a while for children to absorb the new senses of their new surrounding so overwhelming them with questions and affection will only slow down their process of adaptation. If one needs to talk to a parent after drop off, make sure the child stays with the other teacher and that the other teacher is fine dealing with all the kids alone. In order for the harmony of the class to be maintained, conversations with parents can be had outside of class/drop off area where children can't hear/see the teacher. By making the morning salutations as quietly as possible, teachers can raise parents' awareness about the existence of other classes.

Parents tend to linger and socialize when they pick their children up, this can be disruptive, especially if there is an afternoon program in session. A teacher can minimize this by getting close to parents while talking to them quietly and/or continue with the work s/he has to do to encourage them to leave the area. Socializing inside of the building, near a class can disturb the routine of the children so it is good to ask parents to socialize outside the building.

The same norm should be followed for pick-up time. If children are scheduled to be picked up at different times (for example kids who stay for the afterschool hours) it is important that parents don't enter the backyard or class (depending on where the children are at the time of pick-up) This is important because there are children that stay until later and can become upset at the sight of other children being picked up. It is also very disruptive to the remaining classes when parents come into the garden to pick up their children as they are rarely able to do so quickly without disrupting the other classes.

Explaining the rationale behind this policy and helping the parents to see it from the perspective of the other children, can clear confusion and prevent any one taking offense.

Early drop off: (from 8 to 8:50)

In some schools, parents have the option of an early drop off. The following section contains guidelines on how to make the early drop off transition smooth.

When a child is dropped off at school, s/he carries with her the emotions and memories of all that s/he has been experiencing up until that moment. The child might have had a bad dream or poor sleep, an unbalanced breakfast or a rushed or chaotic morning. It is through free play that younger children can either release their energy or replay these situations so that they may harmonize themselves to transition to a new school day.

It is recommended that teachers that are not involved in the early drop-off session, not to interrupt a teacher talking to a child. Abstinence from entering the class, unless completely necessary, is also recommended. A formal hello from distance will do until the child goes to class and sees his/her respective teachers. This morning session is very delicate moment for the child and will affect his/her behavior for the rest of the day, which could result into a change of the dynamic of the class.

It is very difficult for a child to start a day sitting down for a long time and it will affect his/her behavior and physical energy for the rest of day. By that token if the early dropped off children start their day in the back yard they will have a chance to release excess energy and prepare for the day ahead. If weather does not permit going outside, the teacher can prepare inside activities that involve a lot of movement.

Out Door Time (Backyard)

Spending time outdoors, every day, rain or shine, has many benefits. Outdoor play provides children the opportunity to develop their physical skills. Outdoor time, fresh air, sunshine and free play promotes health and physical well-being. Also it is by being in the outdoors from an early age that children can acquire an appreciation for nature. The following section offers important guidelines to teachers to make the backyard time peaceful, fun and safe.

Keeping the outdoor space clean and orderly with things in their proper place, will promote children to do the same. The first person and last person arriving in or leaving the outdoor space can make sure to put everything used back in its place.

By being in constant action and doing something useful, teachers can set a good example and keep the environment positive. Every teacher in the backyard can be assigned a specific section to monitor and maintain. Doing something productive and useful, will directly and indirectly motivate children to play positively, engage with teachers in the heritage language and not feel constantly watched. One can clean an area, fix things or create new activities. Outdoor time is a good place to multiply efforts in practicing the language immersion methods to keep children speaking in the heritage language in the backyard.

The backyard serves as an outdoor free play area; if teachers are talking amongst themselves they will not be able to be aware of all that is going on in the backyard. This in particular can have safety implications. Safety issues aside, each teacher's level of engagement will affect the games that children create so the more engaged and present they are the better. So it is best that teachers do not chat in the yard even if it is related to school issues.

Family-style meals

One of the first social activities that a child regularly participates in is the act of eating in a group. There are many socio-behavioral ethics practiced during a shared meal:

- Teachers can start with preparing a pleasant table with everything needed for that meal (food and utensils) with the help of the children, whenever possible.
- It is highly recommended that the class give recognition for the food they are given (a song or a phrase) and that everyone start eating all at the same time (children above 4 years old).
- Teachers can choose a seat where they can reach most children without getting up and keep it for the rest of the year.

Children eat with all their senses, especially the eyes, and some can reject any food that looks unfamiliar to them.

Serving a little bit of everything on every child's plate every day, will help them become comfortable with different foods on the plate and will hopefully eventually taste all of them.

Children have different eating habits, in part as a result of their culture at home. If their environment at school is consistent and relaxing and if they don't feel judged, they will eventually develop a healthy relationship with food. By that token it is best not compare children's eating behavior nor give an opinion about how they eat

Lunchtime is a shared moment for all the preschoolers; it is a fun environment and time to share stories if a few things are always considered: **While it is essential to keep a fun and sociable dining table, it is also crucial to keep it calm.** The mood of each class will affect the eating behavior of all the children in the dining room.

If a child eats too slowly or is distracted, one can gently motivate him/her to focus more on eating. Conversely, if a child eats too fast, one can ask him/her to chew well, slow down, and relish/taste the food. This balance keeps the table calm and gives enough time for the teachers to eat. It is very important that the whole table waits, including teachers, for everyone to finish before getting up. The class can move on to the next transition when everybody has finished eating and thanks are given to the chef and the school facilitators.

Teachers can raise awareness for clean eating by asking each child to take a look around his/her chair and see how much food has been dropped – When appropriate, children can be asked to participate in cleaning the table around their plates before putting clearing their dishes.

Children will follow the teacher's lead in proper table manners.



Communications

Communication is instrumental in creating a functional and healthy community. A primary goal of any school should be to create a happy and joyful environment for the children to learn and thrive. In order to achieve this goal, it is important that teachers and administration engage in regular and open communications. Participating in weekly, monthly, and seasonal staff meetings are a good means of achieving this goal.

1. *Teacher-Student communication*

Teacher-Student: The most delicate and influential level of communication is the one between the teacher and the child.

Young children learn through imitation and experiences - they learn their sense of good verses bad, right verses wrong, and kind verses unkind through their everyday interactions and observations. It is very important that the teacher help each child to learn from these experiences through a discrete, thoughtful, and respectful communication. If we tower above a child when communicating this can be daunting and over powering for a child and effect their readiness to listen and communicate. **Therefore if communicating about a particular behavior, one can get close to the child – go down to his/her level and talk to him/her kindly and discreetly.** The use of positive communication tends to be more effective with most children. For example, if a child forgets to take his/her shoes off before entering the school, a gentle reminder that “it’s better to take our shoes off before entering so we can have a cleaner school” verses “*oh, you forgot to take your shoes off*” or “*why didn’t you to take your shoes off?*” is much more effective in helping the child take their shoes off independently next time.

Praising extrinsic or superficial things teaches children to value the superficial and extrinsic. For example when we praise a drawing “what a beautiful house!” we are not praising the effort the child put in the drawing rather the end product. Another example is when we praise a child’s dress “what a beautiful dress!” we are sending a message that external beauty is more important than internal beauty. By that token it is best to avoid praising anything superficial. If one feels a child is seeking praise, one can use a warm but calm tone to say “I can tell you worked really hard on that house.” Or “What a soft dress. I bet you’ll be very comfortable in it today.”

Studies show that if a child is told that s/he is smart, instead of boasting the child’s self-esteem, the child will fear failure and that in turn will inhibits him/her to explore new things and learn outside of his/her comfort zone. By that token instead of telling a child s/he is smart, teachers can praise hard work and remind children that we get smart by working hard and trying new things – especially if they seem difficult or challenge us. The harder something is, the more we learn from it.

Commenting on a **child’s physical beauty** also teaches children to value external beauty over internal beauty. One can tell them that they look strong and healthy because they eat well,

or that they have kind eyes, but it is best not tell a child they are “handsome” or that they have “beautiful eyes.”

2. Teacher-Parent communication:

Teacher-Parent: Parents are acknowledged as the child’s first educator, who with the teachers, form a mutual support for the child. The home-school connection is of utmost importance in enabling a child to reach his/her fullest potential.

Everyone benefits from parents and teachers having a mutually respectful and collaborative relationship.

To this end, it is imperative that the teachers and administrators never judge parents and to remember that there is often so much more to any given situation than one may be aware – everyone is doing their best – one should always assume that they have the best of intentions.

It is also important to be aware that there is a fine line between collaborating and meddling – this line varies from family to family. Children flourish best when the parents and the educators work together. Being truthful to parents is the foundation of a healthy and trusting relationship between home and school. By that token situations must not be exaggerated or under represented. It is every parents’ right to know what is happening with their child(ren) – and it is in the child’s best interest that his/her parents have a clear understanding of the situation. This honest and collaborative approach will not help parents address their child(ren)’s needs but will help model open communication for parents so that everyone may work together to help a child overcome challenges. In some circumstance, parents may not want to collaborate with teachers or may not want to hear about their child’s issues. These situations must be dealt with delicately on a case-by-case situation.

3. General Staff communication:

Teacher-Teacher: A clear communication free of gossip, judgment and drama is key for a healthy work environment. When one teacher communicates to another, it is best to be done with respect for each person’s individuality and perspective. These are also opportunities to not only to help ones fellow colleagues, but also to serve as a positive role model for the children. If a teacher has a habit that they are trying to overcome, s/he can ask his/her fellow co-workers to help her/him with the use of or non-verbal cues and/or uninhibited dialogue. Also if one teacher sees that another class or a colleague is having a hard time and s/he is able to help, they can ask if they can be of assistance. If a colleague offers help it is best to be open to receiving it graciously. Conversely, if a teacher feels it would be more disruptive than beneficial to accept help, it is best to politely (and kindly) decline without concern for hurt feelings. The children must always come first – one must not let inhibitions get in the way of the children’s best interest.

Beholding a conflict can be traumatizing for a child therefore it is good to be mindful to **resolve all issues and conflicts outside of classroom settings** where children are not present.

Teachers are here to help each other. If a teacher gives advice or feedback, one shouldn't take it personally, rather listen carefully and objectively and try to understand that person's perspective. If necessary, one can ask for time to digest the information and give oneself some time to process before reacting. Our colleagues' goals are shared –it is when everyone communicates proactively and openly and out of kindness, respect, and consideration that we may attain our goals.

If one observes a colleague is not abiding by the principles and guidelines of the school a technique teachers can use to remind each other is to make eye contact with him/her and gently tug their own ear as a discreet non-verbal means of getting his/her attention. If this is practiced freely and kindly, no one will take offense, as it will be perceived as a means of supporting each other rather than critiquing each other.

4. Teacher-administration communication:

Teacher-administration: Regular weekly, monthly and quarterly meetings between staff and management are essential in the smooth operation of a school. By meeting each week with teachers of each class, the Manager/ Director can keep communications channels open and effective. Topics to discuss in the weekly meetings can be challenges teachers are facing that week, review of lesson plans, parent-school issues....

Monthly staff meetings can be held on a specific day each month (for example: first Monday of the month). It is best for all staff, not just teachers to participate in these sessions. These meetings help to keep everyone aligned and moving toward the common goal.

Quarterly staff development days go beyond normal meetings, as they provide an opportunity for teachers and staff to develop themselves professionally and grow.

The school's administration is there to serve and support the teachers – any issues or questions that cannot be resolved personally can be brought to the organization's administration. **If there is a conflict with a colleague, it is best to *first* discuss it directly with that individual.** If either of the sides feels the issue has not been adequately resolved, then they can take it to the Executive Director/Manager to help them find a way to resolve the issue. If conversations are confidential, it will help to promote trust and open communications. The Executive Director's/ Managers office should be viewed as a safe haven – a place where people can freely express their feelings, concerns, questions, or conflicts without judgment or consequence.

Finding a Substitute:

If a teacher is sick and/or needs to take time off, it is a good practice that teacher the find a substitute to fill his/her shift at School. An effective procedure to use is as follows:

Substitute Procedure for teachers:

1. Coordinate with other teachers so there is no more than one teacher out of a class at one time. Whenever possible, there should not be more than one teacher taking time off on any given day for the entire school. If, for example, you know that a teacher from another class is on vacation, unless in the case of emergency or illness, please do not take a day off until that teacher has returned.
2. Find a substitute that is willing and able to work for you
3. Send an e-mail addressed to:
 - Administrator and manager
 - your co-teacher (so they know to expect your absence)
 - the substitute or substitutes that will be filling in for you

In the e-mail write down the specific date and time that the substitute or substitute(s) will be filling in for you. Also if the school has employee handbook it is good to consult the handbook regarding leaves of absence.

House Keeping:

By treating the school as we would our own home, we create a positive and homelike environment. Here are some suggestions for housekeeping that schools can adopt:

- If something is out of place or dirty, and we are able to take care of it, we do. We pick up trash or toy pieces, both inside and outside.
- The first person in the morning airs out the school but closes all windows before children arrive. ***For the sake of the children's safety, we never open a window from the bottom up, even if there are no children present at the time.***
- The last person that leaves is responsible for end of the day tasks like running the dishwasher, running a load of towels, closing all windows, turning off all lights and fans and taking out the trash. If necessary, classrooms and floors are cleaned and/or vacuumed.
- Trash is sorted by compost – green bin - (all waste except plastic, foil, or glass – milk cartons and take-out containers are okay), regular trash – dark grey bin - (diapers, plastic, etc), and recycling - blue bins - (paper/cardboard, plastic, glass, foil). Please practice the culture of recycling.
- Toys and puzzles are *always* assembled before being put away.
- Children are prepared for their pickup 5-10 minutes before their parents are due to arrive. This includes: a clean diaper (if applicable), a clean face and hands, shoes on, and jacket in an accessible place so that parents don't have to spend time looking for it.

Visitors

During school hours the classes can have three different types of visitors:

1. small group of only adults,
2. individual visitors/tours,
3. larger group of parents with possibility of accompanying children
4. Class observers.

Whenever possible, all teachers are informed of visit or tour at least a day before. Regardless of the type of visitor or observer, it is imperative that the class continues its

normal routine as if the visitors are not there – after all, the purpose of the visit is to observe the school in its natural mode of operation. As a reminder of the teacher’s role in modeling behavior, if the visitors do not distract a teacher, the children will follow suit to the best of their ability. If a teacher is assigned a new volunteer or teacher-in-training, or if there is an outside observer in your class, please ask her/him to sit in a discreet corner and to observe without interacting with the children. Visitors can not interact with students without filling requisite paperwork and background checks first.



Conclusion

It is our responsibility to participate in raising mindful, conscious, curious, thoughtful, resourceful, confident, and healthy human beings. As a role model, an effective teacher embodies these qualities and leads by example.

In so doing, teaching does not become ones vocation, rather a way of life
“Education is not preparation for life; Education is life itself.”

John Dewey