

GOLESTAN PLAY POLICY



This document was prepared by
BAY TREE DESIGN
for Golestan School.

BAY TREE DESIGN

p 510.644.1320
w baytreedesign.com
a 2927 Newbury Street, Suite B
Berkeley / CA



GOLESTAN
Golestan School
320 San Carlos Ave
El Cerrito, CA 94530
www.golestankids.com

Photo Credit: Paige Green and Golestan School.
All rights are reserved.



Table of contents

PAGE	I. SUMMARY OF PLAY POLICY
02	

PAGE	II. PURPOSE OF PLAY POLICY
04	






PAGE	III. PLAY POLICY
06	Introduction
	Golestan Education Philosophy on Play
	Golestan Education Principles of Play
	Golestan Education Play Objectives:
	School Ground, Play Supervision, Community

PAGE	APPENDICES
20	Appendix A: International Rights and Declaration
	Appendix B: Definitions
	Appendix C: References



I. PLAY POLICY SUMMARY

The summary of the Play Policy below includes the main points of understanding for play, the play principles and the people needed to ensure this policy works.

-  Golestan Education children learn and play in a collaborative atmosphere with a heuristic approach.
-  Golestan Education recognizes play as equal to formal education in terms of its essential role in enabling children and young people to engage positively with the world around them.
-  Play is essential for well-rounded physical, intellectual, social and emotional growth, where children learn what cannot be explicitly taught.
-  Play is one of the ways children learn how values, beliefs and traditions come to live through their actions and engagements with other people.
-  Quality play environments and opportunities shall be available to all children at Golestan Education.

- ❁ Children are entitled to respect as individuals for their own qualities and abilities.
- ❁ Children have the right to a secure play environment free of unacceptable risks and hazards. Children have the right to a play environment with opportunities for graduated challenges and beneficial risks.
- ❁ Golestan Education's play provision will be based on empowering the child.
- ❁ Children shall have control of their own play activity.
- ❁ Children have the right to expect consistency and clarity in adult values.
- ❁ Children are part of, and contribute to, the cultural life of Golestan Education.
- ❁ Six Objectives describe and outline how the play policy shall work these includes play supervisor roles, community education and support, and site program, design and maintenance.
- ❁ The Play Policy cannot support the children unless the play supervisors, school grounds maintenance, and community support the policy.





II. PLAY POLICY PURPOSE

A. Purpose

This play policy builds on Golestan Education's core philosophy, guides, handbooks, practices and publications that have been developed over the past ten years since its inception. This policy provides:

Consistency of principles – a play policy identifies an agreed set of principles and definitions about play and its value for children's well-being and development. It provides principles that give children opportunities to develop to their full potential and master their environment.

Focus on the children – a play policy provides the context in which the focus can be shifted from existing foundations and practices to the needs of the Golestan Education children, creating an environment that fosters young people to “think” through physical activity while using their whole body, mind and senses to understand their world.

Transparency for all – a play policy clarifies the purposes of provision for supervisors, maintenance staff, and funders.

Foundation for safety practice – a play policy provides the framework for Golestan Education to develop a practice and method of determining what is appropriate safety practice for this specific population of children.

Community understanding – a policy provides a clear philosophy that demonstrates the importance for different types of play and the need for community understanding, commitment, and support for this type of play at Golestan Education.



B. Development of Policy

This play policy for Golestan Education was developed with the Golestan Play Committee (1) who are committed to enhancing the quality of children's lives at Golestan Education. This play policy is endorsed by the Golestan Board and specifically written for Golestan Education located in El Cerrito, California.

BAY TREE DESIGN facilitated the process and developed the policy with the Committee. BAY TREE DESIGN'S professional experience and education in Play Policy has been from:

- professional research and work on play spaces,
- work with Bernard Spiegal at PLAYLINK,
- probono work with organizations such as International School Grounds Alliance and Children and Nature Network,
- and through Lisa Howard's CPSI training.



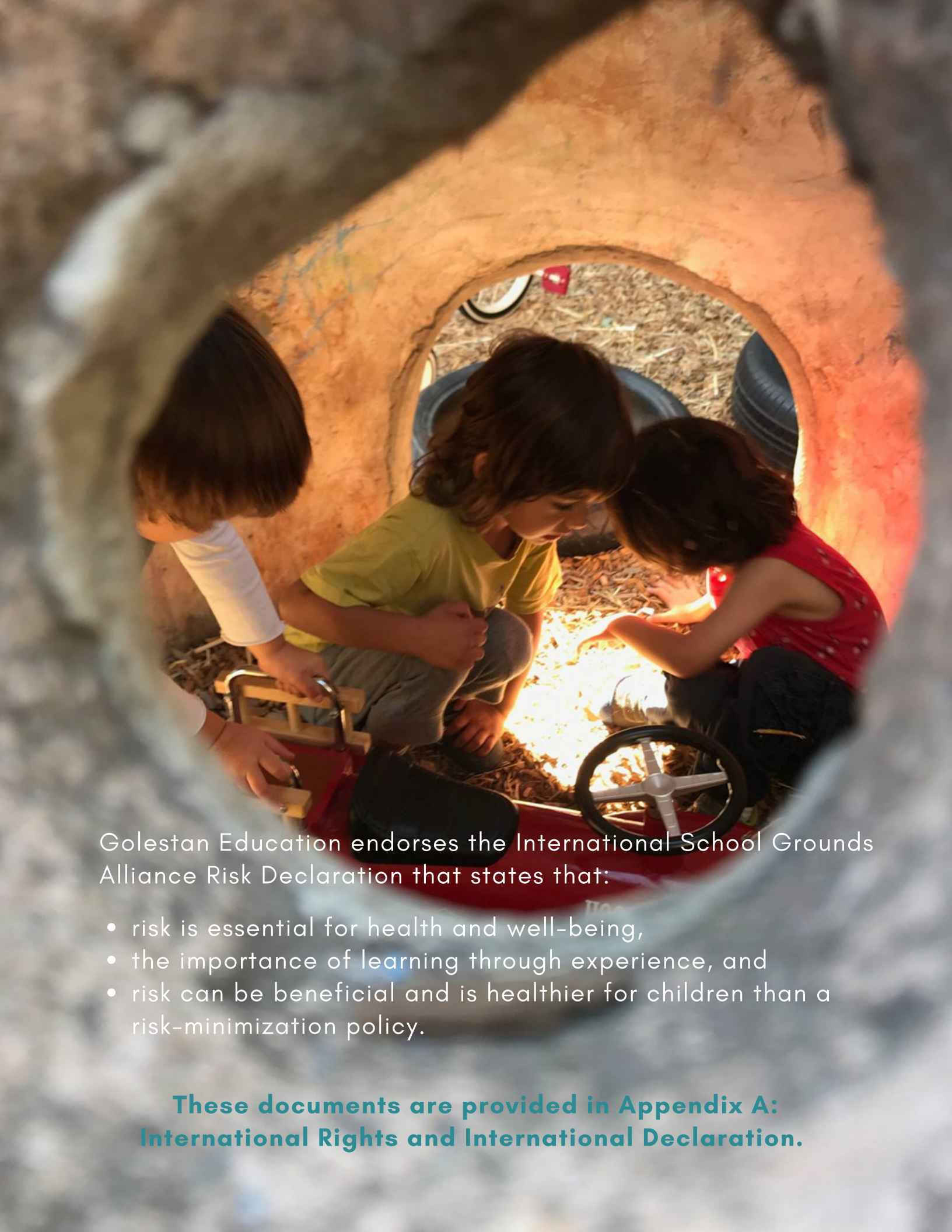
III. Play Policy

A. Introduction

This policy lays out Golestan Education's understanding of play and confirms its commitment to ensuring that quality play environments and opportunities are available to all of its children. The goal of this policy is to ensure that quality of children's play opportunities continues to develop as the school and community grows.

Golestan Education endorses Article 31 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

'State Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.'



Golestan Education endorses the International School Grounds Alliance Risk Declaration that states that:

- risk is essential for health and well-being,
- the importance of learning through experience, and
- risk can be beneficial and is healthier for children than a risk-minimization policy.

**These documents are provided in Appendix A:
International Rights and International Declaration.**

B. Golestan Education Philosophy on Play

The philosophical influences of Golestan Education are Montessori, Reggio Emilia and Waldorf, all of which have play as a keystone to their philosophies. At Golestan Education children learn and play in a collaborative atmosphere with a heuristic approach that takes place in the classroom and on the school grounds.

Play is a fundamental way children come to understand themselves and the world around them (2). Through play, children master their environment and learn through experience. Children are provided with opportunities to develop confidence, resilience and competence with challenges in play. Children hone their creativity and diligence through intellectual forms of play. Play affords opportunities for socializing where children continue to understand altruism, kindness, compassion, responsibility and the importance of community. In all forms of play children are responding to their individual curiosity. In summation, play is essential for well-rounded physical, intellectual, social and emotional growth, where children learn what cannot be explicitly taught.

- **Physical** – There are many benefits from play including the development of gross and fine motor skills, balance skills, hand-eye coordination and increased levels of physical fitness. Play also provides affordances for the development of the sensory system – proprioceptive (body position and movement) and vestibular (head position and balance) senses, as well as visual, auditory, taste, touch and smell.
- **Intellectual** – Quality play experiences provide many developmental opportunities including: problem solving skills, risk assessment, planning skills, creative construction skills, language skills and executive function skills. Creativity comes from these forms of experiences.
- **Social / emotional** – There is a wide range of social and emotional benefits from play including developing emotional intelligence, fostering resilience and competence, honing emotional regulation, providing opportunities for collaboration and a state of 'flow' (3), and the developing of self-efficacy.

In addition to the benefits of development, play is one of the ways children learn how values, beliefs and traditions come to life through their actions and engagements with other people.

An enriched play environment includes opportunities for the physical, intellectual and social / emotional play described above. Golestan Education creates an environment where the emphasis in play is on the role of nature, imagination and sensorial experiences (4). Golestan Colab (5) developed a publication, *Natural Playscapes for Children*, that outlines how a school ground can be developed for an enriched play environment.



Children who have the opportunity to play in an enriched play environment are more ready to learn in the classroom (6).

Golestan Education recognizes play as equal to formal education in terms of its essential role in enabling children and young people to engage positively with the world around them (7). Golestan Education also recognizes the value of free play on the school grounds.

Lastly the process of enriched play results in happy and engaged children. This form of play intrinsically includes joy (8)!

For definitions on play and references refer to Appendix B: Definitions and Appendix C: References. In addition to the evidence-based research Golestan Education shall look to two other sources:

- *the community's own adult knowledge and memory of what they enjoyed as children, and*
- *the unobtrusive observation of children when left to their own devices while playing.*

C. Golestan Education Principles of Play

The following principles shall provide direction for all of Golestan Education's decisions about play provision.

- 1** Children are entitled to respect for their own unique combination of qualities and abilities at Golestan Education.
- 2** Children have a right to a secure play environment free from unacceptable levels of risk at Golestan Education. Conversely children have a right to a play environment that provides opportunities for challenges at Golestan Education.
- 3** Golestan Education's play provision will be based on the principle of empowering the child and increasing their choices to give opportunities for children to develop to their full potential.
- 4** Children shall have control of their own play activity and are free to play within Golestan Education's setting. Children shall have the right to free play where play is process driven and directed by the child.
- 5** Children have the right to expect consistency and clarity in adult values at Golestan Education.
- 6** Children are part of, and contribute to, the cultural life of their community at Golestan Education.



IV. Golestan Education Play Objectives

The objectives laid out below build on the Play Principles and provide the “how” to the Play Policy. The Play Objectives are further clarified with sections for:

- (A) School ground,
- (B) Play Supervision, and
- (C) Community.

Golestan Education affirms that its school ground's maintenance, play supervision, and school community shall work to support these Play Objectives.

- **Objective One:** Golestan Education play supervisors shall respect each child as an individual for their unique qualities and abilities.
- **Objective Two:** The Golestan Education grounds shall be programmed, designed and maintained with a range of maximum play opportunities to foster the positive development of each child as an individual and for the student community as a whole.
- **Objective Three:** Golestan Education shall manage the balance between the need to offer beneficial risk and challenges and the need to keep children from being exposed to unacceptable risks of death, serious injury or exposure to hazards.
- **Objective Four:** Golestan Education play supervisors shall be advocates for play, unobtrusive with the children and consistent with following the Play Policy.
- **Objective Five:** Golestan Education supervisors shall facilitate social development through play as opportunities arise to foster independence and self-respect for each individual as well as children's respect for others.
- **Objective Six:** Golestan Education shall provide educational talks and access to research to inform the Golestan community – families and guardians – of the importance of enriched play and its various aspects.



A. School Ground

The school ground provides opportunities in play through the design and program of the yard as well as the maintenance of the space.

1. School Ground Elements and Spaces

Golestan Education shall ensure that play opportunities are created that allow children and young people to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment within challenging but secure settings, free from unacceptable levels of risk. The emphasis is always on the child's choice and control over their own experience (9).

The criteria for an enriched play environment for Golestan Education includes:

- Flexible and open-ended spaces that have capacity for change.
- Graduated challenge and beneficial risk in relation to the physical environment.
- Physical access to natural elements and materials for play – earth, water, fire, air and plants.
- Visual access to environmental processes.
- Use of local materials.
- Space and circuits for movement and play patterns such as running, jumping, rolling, climbing, and balancing.
- Loose and malleable materials.
- Stimulation of the five senses.
- Spaces and elements for a variety of social interactions.
- Emotional and physical space that foster playing with identity and experiencing a range of emotions.
- Layout that considers program relationships and play circuits.
- Spaces that nurture immersive experiences.

In addition to the built elements Golestan Education shall provide a yard full of movable parts and elements and plants. At the core of the Golestan Education program is the philosophy that natural materials in a simple, soothing environment create a place where children can thrive (10). Building on this idea, Golestan Colab, published *Natural Playscapes for Children* in Spring of 2016.

The *Natural Playscapes* document outlines Golestan Education's identified benefits for natural play areas, the opportunities for children to evaluate risks as well as elements of a natural playscape. This document provides additional examples for enriched play spaces in addition to the list above.

An essential and often overlooked element in a school ground is the opportunity to take challenges and beneficial risks. Golestan Education seeks to empower children rather than "talk down to them". Thus the grounds are designed with elements that provide risk.

These elements are assessed at the design phase, assessed after construction and will be maintained on an on-going basis to ensure that the risks are the appropriate level of challenge for the current student community and to ensure that the elements do not pose hazards to the children.



2. School Ground Elements and Spaces

The maintenance of the school ground will require daily, weekly, quarterly, and yearly maintenance practices. Golestan Education should: determine the standard of care for the school ground; establish a Risk Assessment Coordinator for the school ground; and develop a site history file for the school ground. If Golestan Education proactively manages the beneficial risk elements and other aspects of the playground Golestan Education shall be providing a playground with appropriate challenges and without the risk of hazards.

The initial inspection of the site after construction shall act as the baseline. Inspections by the Risk Assessment Coordinator shall take place on a regular basis and shall be followed up with maintenance per the hazard priorities. As Golestan Education settles into the new grounds the school shall identify acceptable levels or risk exposure, such as the depth of wood mulch for the play surfacing.

Daily and weekly maintenance of the school grounds shall be taken care of by the students, teachers and maintenance staff. When an element appears unsafe or an injury has occurred they should let the Risk Assessment Coordinator know of the injury or element in question.



Daily and weekly maintenance of the school grounds shall be taken care of by the students, teachers and maintenance staff. When an element appears unsafe or an injury has occurred they should let the Risk Assessment Coordinator know of the injury or element in question.

The Risk Assessment Coordinator and any others responsible for the regulation, inspection and implementation of health and safety maintenance, shall inspect the elements on a regular basis such as quarterly and annually as determined by Golestan Education. At the time of inspection the Risk Assessment Coordinator shall be required to make judgements appropriate to the particular circumstances of the individual element and its aims and objectives. Factors to be considered shall include, for example, the ages and capabilities of the children who use the element.

Golestan Education is committed to ensuring that play providers are given play specific training and support to enable them to conduct risk assessments. A good starting point for understanding risk assessment is *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide* by David Ball, Tim Gill and Bernard Spiegel. The book explains that risk assessment is a relatively straightforward technique that, when understood, can be a highly functional tool supporting the development of quality play environments.



B. Play Supervision

Play supervision shall aim to offer children play opportunities that provide a dual focus: creating an environment that is rich in possibility for children each day and acting as a resource for children. Supervisors shall aim to create the conditions necessary to ensure the minimum intervention in children's activity consistent with keeping them free from unacceptable levels of risk. This approach has been characterised as 'low intervention, high response', a style of working that supports rather than directs children.

At Golestan Education supervisors are asked to respect the mental and physical space of each individual child, respect the different temperaments and to respect each child's dignity. Supervisors shall allow children to test their boundaries of capabilities physically and intellectually.

Supervisors shall maintain an awareness of each child in order that they may make decisions to help meet each child's needs so that they can become confident and thrive. This holds true in the classroom and school ground for learning and play and shall be considered in all supervision decisions on the school grounds (11).

Appropriate supervision is essential for the quality of play. Play supervision shall follow the Golestan Teacher Guideline as well as The Playwork Principles (12) that are applicable to supervisions (Principles 4 -8) as shown below.

4 For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.

5 The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.

6 The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.

7 Playworkers recognize their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.

8 Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.

Lastly, play supervisors shall create opportunities that allow children to explore and experience themselves and their world through the medium of play. This includes offering children opportunities to take acceptable risks, in the school ground, that are challenging and stimulating.

C. Community

In order for the Golestan Education children to experience enriched play and the many benefits of play, Golestan Education will need the support of the families, guardians and community. This support comes in the form of allowing the children to take acceptable levels of risk while at school and accepting that they may come home from school filthy from head to toe with the exception of their faces and hands.

Each school year Golestan Education shall hold one educational workshop that shall provide parents and guardians with new information in regards to play and development. In addition, Golestan Education shall provide the community with access to documents and books that outline the role of play in healthy development to ensure all community members understand the role of play in childhood.



APPENDIX





Appendix A: International Rights and Declaration **{Please find at www.golestankids/playpolicy}**



Appendix B: Definitions **{Please find at www.golestankids/playpolicy}**



Appendix C: References

The references listed below are in addition to the documents in the preceding appendices and the references they include.

Alvarez, L., *Educators flocking to Finland of literate children*, New York Times, April 9, 2005.

ANJI, *The Fundamental Rights and Responsibilities of True Play*, website.

Ball, David, Gill, Tim, and Spiegel, Bernard, *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide*, Play England.

Ball, David, Gill, Tim, and Spiegel, Bernard, *Risk-Benefit Assessment Form*, Play England.

Brussoni Mariana, *Risky Play and Children's Safety; Balancing Priorities for Optimal Child Development*.

Golestan, *Parent Handbook*.

Golestan, *Teacher Guideline*.

Golestan Colab, *Guide to Teaching*.

Golestan Colab, *Natural Playscapes for Children*.

Golestan Kids, *Employee Manual*.

Gray, Peter, *Free to LEARN*, Basic Books.

Lester, Stuart and Wedny Russell, *Play for a Change*, Summary Report, University of Gloucestershire.

Moore, Robin C. and Goltsman, Susan M., *Play for All Guidelines: Planning Designing and Management of Outdoor Play Settings for All Children*, MIG.

Nature Play Solutions, *Why Play*, website.

Perry, Susan K., *Creative Kids Learn to Flow*, Psychology Today.

Play England, *Quality in Play: Standards, assessment indicators and evidence – a manual*, Play England.

PLAYLINK, *Play at School*

Robinson, Felicity, and Browning, Laura, *Naturally Inclusive – a new approach to design for play, Learning through Landscapes*.

Solomon, Susan G., *The Science of Play: How to Build Playgrounds that Enhance Children's Development*, UPNE.

The Playwork Foundation, The Playwork Principles, website.

¹ Yalda Modabber and Megan Stromberg.

² The Playwork Foundation, The Playwork Principles, Principle 1

³ Susan K. Perry Ph.d., Creative Kids Learn to Flow, Psychology Today and Nature Play Solutions, “Flow is being in a state where you are so fully engaged, or immersed, in an activity that it is your sole focus and you lose track of time.”

⁴ The Golestan Colab Guide to Teaching, p. 3

⁵ is a probono arm of Goletsan that provides support to educational communities in underdeveloped countries raising bicultural children

⁶ PLAYLINK, Play at School Scheme

⁷ Golestan Teacher Guideline, p. 5

⁸ Golestan Teacher Guideline, p. 16, and ANJI play, This is ANJI

⁹ The Playwork Foundation, The Playwork Principles, Principle 2

¹⁰ Golestan Education, Employee Handbook, p. 4

¹¹ The Playwork Foundation, The Playwork Principles, Principle 2

¹² The Playwork Foundation, The Playwork Principles









GOLESTAN

Golestan School
320 San Carlos Ave
El Cerrito, CA 94530
www.golestankids.com