



Golestan School
320 San Carlos Ave, El Cerrito, CA 510.704.8541

Golestan's Approach to Learning in Preschool



We are Kind.
We are Thoughtful.
We are Courageous.

Table of Contents

The Story of Golestan	4
Golestan’s Mission	4
Golestan’s School Culture?/Values?	4
The Philosophical Influences of Our Preschool	4
What does it mean to be a child?	6
Toddlers	6
Preschoolers	7
Teacher’s Impact	9
Teaching Principles at Golestan	10
Respecting Children’s Space and Temperaments	10
Supporting Good Decisions	11
Consistency	11
Repetition	11
Rewarding	11
Counting	11
Praising	12
Speaking to Children	13
Dealing with Disruptive Behavior	14
Language Immersion	15
General Class Environment	17
Class Management	18
Lesson Plan	18
Projects	19
Smocks or aprons	19
Clean Up	20
Bringing Toys to School	20
Circle Time	21
Learning Opportunities	21
Hurting (hitting etc.)	21
Transitions	22

Class Keeping	22
Children’s Pick-up and Drop-off time	25
Outdoor Time (Hayaat)	26
Family-Style Meals	26
Communication	27
Teacher-Student communication	28
Teacher-Parent communication	28
General Staff communication	29
Teacher-administration communication	30
Finding a Substitute	30
Housekeeping	30
Visitors	31
Conclusion	31

Section 1:



The Story of Golestan

Golestan's Mission

The mission of Golestan is to support the development of curious, kind, and altruistic children through experiential and heuristic learning, with a special focus on environmental stewardship and global competency.

Golestan Education does this through the following offerings:

The School: Our laboratory school gives our students a deep understanding and respect for the world they live in through a thoughtful inquiry based pedagogical practice. The children at our school understand their role in the world as the people responsible for its well being. Educators from the public and private sectors all over the world use the school as a model for thoughtful and intentional child-centric practices and pedagogy.

The Colab: To empower and support educators and communities to rethink how schools should look and operate, and to create their ideal learning environment for children by offering pro-bono consultancy and resources in the following areas: 1) the integration and application of hands-on and experiential learning practices and approaches, and 2) environmental stewardship and global competency.

Golestan School's Values

We are kind. We are thoughtful. We are courageous.

On kindness: *We are kind by caring for and cooperating with others.*

At Golestan, we believe children are inherently fair and can choose to be kind. Helping them develop a disposition of kindness in all their interactions is the foundation of our social emotional learning at Golestan. When a child is kind, it is the lens through which they see themselves and their place in the world. They strive to be helpers in every situation in order to make the world a more peaceful and just place.

On being thoughtful: *We are thoughtful by reflecting on how our words and actions impact others and by challenging ourselves to do high quality work.*

We believe it is our job as adults to prepare children for a rich and fulfilling life ahead. To that end, it is important to us that the children coming out of Golestan have an innate awareness of the people and the world around them. To be thoughtful is to understand that every

choice we make in life - be it small or large - has the potential to impact others, either negatively or positively.

We also believe it is our responsibility to give children the opportunity to value effort and thought in their learning, and creating high quality work that reflects this learning.

On courage: *We are courageous by making good choices and taking risks to try new things.*

Be it in the dining room, on the playground, in the classroom, or in a difficult social situation, it takes courage to grow from difficult situations. Our dream is for our children to face these difficult situations with courage - even when it feels impossibly hard - so that they may grow physically, cognitively, and emotionally. By giving our children the opportunity to push through these difficult situations, not only are we showing them that we trust them (thereby building confidence), but we are helping them shed the fears that inhibit people from overcoming their fears.

The Philosophical Influences of Our Preschool

Our preschool gives children a deep understanding and respect for the world they live in through an inquiry-based approach to teaching and a rich, comprehensive curriculum. The teachers are skilled at teaching the whole child, fostering not only their academic skills, but also their innate sense of fairness and disposition of curiosity. The end goal is for our children to be kind, thoughtful, and courageous human beings with the ideas, skills, and character to make positive contributions to their school and the world.

At the core of our preschool program is the philosophy that natural materials in a simple, soothing and structured environment create a place where children can thrive. The Golestan ideology puts an emphasis on the role of nature, imagination, and sensorial experiences.

Golestan applies a hybrid approach to education by borrowing from Waldorf, Montessori, and Reggio Emilia teaching philosophies.

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. About 80% of our teaching materials are Montessori based. 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.

Our aesthetics, affinity for all that is natural and not branded, and emphasis on natural rhythms, imaginative play, and storytelling are directly borrowed from Waldorf philosophies. 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.

Our emergent curriculum driven by the students’ personal interests is influenced by Reggio teaching principles. 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. Children have rights as humans 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.

The themes in our curriculum are designed to lead into each other for a rich and profound understanding of the world we live in.

The preschool program operates yearly and focuses on teaching empathy, sharing, imaginative play, and the development of oral language through listening and communication skills. The preschool program is a full Persian language immersion program.



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 should be taken 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*

At Golestan, the focus for two and three year olds is to teach:

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

All of these are learned in a warm and encouraging environment, much of which is through imaginative free play.

Physical Development

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.

Emotional Development

Very self-centered, just begins 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.

Social Development

Solitary play, dependent on adult guidance, plays with dolls, refers to self by name, socially immature, little concept of others as “people”, responds to simple direction.

Age 2

Intellectual Development

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.

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

Music is an important part of the toddlers' day. 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.

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 an easy going 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 with 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, desire to understand environment, answers questions, imaginative, may recite few nursery rhymes</p>
<p><u>Physical Development</u> Skips on one foot, draws people, cuts with scissors (not well), can wash and dry face, dresses self, standing broad jump, throws ball overhand, 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, and 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 the meaning of words, knows colors, begins to know the difference between fact and fiction-lying, interested in the environment, city, stores, etc.</p>

In Math, the focus is on number sense: concept of quantity from 1-10 and they learn to count to 20 in Persian. Recognition of shapes, colors and patterns also build the foundation for more advanced mathematical skills.

The children develop phonemic awareness through songs, stories, poems, and rhyming on a daily basis. Children learn correct, comfortable writing and drawing positions and practice writing their names and letters in English.

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 continue to be a central means of teaching language, math, science, and social sciences in the preschool class. Music is an important part of the preschooler's experience. Singing Persian songs and poems with creative movement helps children learn language while expressing themselves physically; they also develop an understanding of pitch, rhythm, and movement.

Practical life activities such as sorting, pouring, and manipulating are daily activities for the children. Our art programs are exceptionally rich and exciting. Children learn to work with different media (water colors, tempera, collage, pastels, etc) by fully exploring each of them such that they are able to understand how each looks and feels. Art projects are never product driven, rather the richness of the experience is in the journey itself. Our science and nature programs help to support a child's deep understanding of the world we live in.

At Golestan, projects are never product driven – they are always process driven.

The richness of the experience is in the journey itself.



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.

The environment at Golestan is structured, while the children are completely free within that structure. This structure follows 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, and Golestan teachers perform their tasks consciously and carefully, aware that they are models worthy of imitation.

As teachers, it is important to model the type of behaviors and interactions we would like to see from our children. For example, if we walk 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 we take a deep breath before we react to things, children will do the same when facing similar situations.

If we speak to a child with truth, kindness, and respect s/he will not only respond to us in kind but s/he 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. In Golestan we speak in a low volume, in turn 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 softly or whispering.

Teaching Principles at Golestan

1. Respecting Children's Space and Temperaments

Respect for mental space gives the opportunity for the 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. At Golestan we take this into account when dealing with each situation - each child is 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 our 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 the children when they are open and receptive to it when greeting or comforting, it is best to kiss them on the top of their heads or their foreheads.

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 are treated fairly and equally regardless of the teacher's temperament or preferences.

We maintain a keen awareness of each child's temperament so that we may make decisions to help meet the child's needs so that s/he can become confident and thrive.

Respect for a child's dignity is important for supporting respect and healthy self-esteem. At Golestan we are discreet when talking to a child. If s/he misbehaves, we do not discuss or reprimand the child in front of the other classmates. Whenever possible, we try to imagine what it would feel like to do something wrong and how we would want our teacher to address it if we were in the child's situation.

2. Supporting Good Decisions

Supporting good decisions enables a child to feel secure and less anxious about 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, we 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?*" we would say: "*You can wear your jacket because it's cold outside.*" In this scenario, we're giving the child the opportunity to make a good decision – we're also 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 we're 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 young children. This is not just related to academics – it also applies to learning classroom expectations and school norms. Since most children are experiential learners, repetition and consistency in actions and responses give meaning to

the children's experiences and help 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. **We never reward children with tangible items or prizes.** Nor do we give conditional privileges: “if you do x, you can do y.” Conversely, we do not threaten children: “if you do x, you will *lose* y.” We 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.

- When a child is upset or having a tantrum, we help him/her take **10 deep breaths.**
-

7. Praising

At Golestan praising a child happens discretely and softly without too much emotional expression. It is also validating, not flattering. A child should not be praised for doing what is expected of him/her, rather, his/her efforts should be validated.

We validate, we don't praise.

We don't say: “Good job! You cleaned up after yourself!”

We say: “I saw you carry those heavy blocks back to the shelf. I appreciate your hard work.”

It is important to get close to the child when talking to him/her - 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.

On (rare) occasions, it can be very effective to **praise a child for** a particular outcome we would like **the rest of the children to emulate.** In this scenario, we do not say, “look at how well x cleaned up the play area” – we 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, we can gently tell the class “thank you for helping each other clean up your classroom.” Again, a teacher’s speech is not overly animated, 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.

While subtly praising good behavior can boost a child’s confidence and help him/her make good choices, praising a child’s 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

At Golestan we use the formal “you,” say “please,” and “thank you” to the children. If we teach by example, they will learn to be respectful and compassionate with others.

When a child forgets, we consistently prompt them to say please and thank you – if their tone becomes whiny or disrespectful (to us or another child), we bring it to their attention. For younger children we *repeat it in a calm and respectful way*, they will most likely repeat after us - otherwise we can kindly ask them to do so. For older children we *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.

At Golestan we tell the truth. The child must know that nothing is as offensive as not telling the truth. To do this, we lead by example. For example, if a child is curious to know what a teacher said to another student, we can kindly say that we 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, we do not say “yes” if this is not true. Instead, we can say, “she had a great morning; tomorrow we will work on having a better afternoon.”

By extension, we do not have the children participate in deceptive behavior. For example, we do not tell a child “this is our secret” or “shhh, just for you.” These teach the child 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 we did not specifically ask a child not to share something with his/her parents.

At Golestan teachers do not finish sentences for the children. Just as we want the child to learn not to interrupt people, we don't interrupt a child when speaking – even if only to help them formulate their sentences or finish their thoughts.

By extension we do not give excuses or justifications 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. We want the child to *learn to communicate*, so we need to *give them the opportunity* to do so independently.

At Golestan we do not whisper in anyone's ear - we teach 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 they've done is wrong and feels badly about it. Talking about it will only make the child feel worse, 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, then gently and discreetly we remove the child from the situation again. We repeat this scenario several times until the child tires of this process and starts to show more impulse control. **It is important not to give the child a lot of attention during these periods outside of the classroom** – we simply go to a quiet place together – we do not make eye contact – we do not talk. Once a reasonable amount of time has passed and the child seems ready to return, we ask: “are you ready to return?” Again, we minimize dialogue – if we must talk, we keep the message brief yet meaningful. The more we talk, the more likely a child is to tune us out.

There are no time-outs at Golestan. We want the children to 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 are (discreetly) taken aside to discuss the consequences of continuing their behavior.

The 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 calm down and will be able to continue your project". Of utmost importance is that we as teachers consistently follow through with any strategy we use.

There are some situations where an alternate approach is more effective. If we know 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.), we use our best judgment to address the situation. For example, if a child is acting out because of a need for attention, we can hold the child closely – praise him/her for her qualities ("you're so kind" "you're very hard working" etc.) - once we sense the child has settled down and has been reset, we ask him/her if s/he's ready to return to join his/her friends. If a child is having a challenging day and we think it's best to keep him/her with us, we can tell him/her that we would love it if s/he could give us some help in cleaning up the classroom.

Language Immersion

Unless in an emergency or translating, English is never – ever – spoken by teachers – even to children who do not speak Persian. We do not mix languages – If we blank on a word, we try asking the kids if they know how to say it in Persian (in this context, it's okay to use the English word). If a child does not understand what we're saying and we are unable to communicate nonverbally using body language, we use the sandwich method: "een aabeeyeh" "this is blue" "een aabeeyeh" then we have the child repeat what we said. We do not *answer or respond* to a child if they speak to us in English. We have them repeat the sentence back to us in Persian before we respond to them. We do not ask them to say it in Persian. *We must repeat the sentence in Persian exactly as they would say it to us.* This is tedious and painful, but will very quickly yield positive results if done *consistently*.

At Golestan we use proper Persian when speaking to the children. This includes no baby talk.

At Golestan we do not use terms such as "haapoo" for "sag" or "peeshee" for "gorbeh." If we speak correctly with the children, they will learn to speak proper Persian.

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 Persian. 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” 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 at Golestan is to have **happy and engaged** children. To achieve this goal, it is important that the teachers respect the individuality of each child and create a collaborative relationship with them. We always try to see the child's perspective and deal with each situation on a case-by-case basis. If confronted with an uncomfortable situation, we pick our battles, evaluate our priorities and overarching goals, and focus on attaining them.

The **culture of sharing** is encouraged at all times within the classroom and between classes. If a child refuses to share something, we remind them that things here belong to Golestan 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. You may use a sand timer to help the child know when his/her turn is over.

Golestan's environment is a **joyful one**. We try to keep this culture alive in the classroom through singing (softly), acting with love and kindness and creating a harmonious environment. It is in such 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 the physical body.

At Golestan, class routines and procedures are clear and consistent. The classroom should have a home-like feeling where teachers and children work together with respect for each other and love for one another. We endeavor to act with kindness and compassion at all times

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 does 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

The educational approach at Golestan is process driven and not focused on the final product. When writing our lesson plans, we think about what the children are going to experience and learn during a project rather than what they are going to make.

If a lesson plan is not successful in engaging most of the children – 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.

We try to write as many details in our lesson plans as possible – Also we have several back-up lesson plans and include 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.”).

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 is 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 promote their individual self-expression, not (for example) something they color in a precut template. When given a model for their 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.

Along the same lines, we do not give the children worksheets or ask them to color within the lines. On occasion, older children are given "Doodle" sheets to work on. These can be colored, if the child chooses to, but the teachers do not encourage the child to stay within the lines. In fact, teachers should encourage the child to go *outside* the lines and fill in the white space on the page.

3. Smocks or aprons

At Golestan teachers make sure that Smocks or aprons are 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. Having a routine that incorporates putting on the aprons will minimize any conflict that may arise in getting the children to wear them. 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

At Golestan we ask that the Children put away toys from one activity before moving on to the next one. For preschoolers, we make the cleanup process a game (while singing the cleanup song), and are sure to leave enough time for it – it should never be rushed, rather, cleanup time should 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, you can ask a child to put the babies (dolls) to sleep so they can get some rest before playing with other kids. You can ask another child to clean up the kitchenette so that the next chef can cook a good meal for his friend.

Set up a specific place and order for children to leave their tools after each project. A big tray and cup can be good places for them to leave their little trays and paintbrushes. Due to the low teacher-student ratio at Golestan, 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. We 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 you think it's best to keep him/her with you, you can tell him/her that you would love it if he could give you some help in cleaning up the classroom.

Whenever possible, kids should help with cleanup, set up, projects etc. It's 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 our system – not that the system serves them but that we all serve it.

5. Bringing Toys to School

The general rule at Golestan is that children cannot 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 you recognize that the child is particularly anxious about separating from a toy or belonging you 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”.
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, please ask the parents to give you the object directly so that you 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, you 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 us make light of challenging conditions – in every situation, we ask ourselves “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.)

If we witness a child hurting someone (either physically or emotionally), we set aside all judgment and **give our attention to the child that was hurt**. Once the child has been soothed then we 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. 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, 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. We never speak for a child or put words in a child's mouth.

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.

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

If an older child hurts another, we 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, we have them explain what they are apologizing for. A simple “I’m sorry” can become meaningless unless there is a context associated with it.

Children of all ages should not “tattle” on each other. If there is a conflict between two children, we help them to resolve it together. For example “x joun, y just hit me” “please tell y ‘lotfan mano nazan’ – next time you can tell him/her yourself.” You can 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. At Golestan there is always 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.

We always remind the children to walk while inside the building- **no running inside**. They should 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. Therefore at Golestan we set a specific place for everything so children can grow independently 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 after

you. As a backup plan, you always 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.

When setting a class or a project, we **use the philosophy that less is more.**

The smallest objects can be very stimulating for a child so they don't need much to bring out their creativity. 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.

Toys should be simple and relatively undefined to stimulate their imaginations and to 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 for 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. This should be the general ethic in respect to class keeping. If we leave the class better than we received it for the next teacher, the next teacher will do the same, if not more, for the teacher after. At Golestan we are respectful of each class' materials and if possible try to fix things as they break.

SECTION 3:



Children's Pick-up and Drop-off time

During the morning drop off, we try to make the transition calmly, inviting the child to come to us and not us to the child. It takes a while for them to absorb the new senses of their new surroundings so overwhelming them with questions and affection will only slow down their process of adaptation. If we need to talk to a parent after drop off, we make sure the child stays with the other teacher and that the other teacher is fine dealing with all the kids alone. In that case we have our conversation outside of class/drop off area where children can't hear/see you. Please make the morning salutations as quietly as possible to 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. You can minimize this by getting close to parents while talking to them quietly and continuing with the work you have to do to encourage them to leave the area. If you see parents socializing inside of the building, please do not hesitate to nicely ask them to continue their socialization outside the building.

The same norm is followed for pick-up time. If parents need to pick up their children from the backyard, a teacher will be at the gate to help them abstain from entering the backyard area. This is important because there are children that stay until 5:30 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.

If a parent seems confused or offended by this, please explain it to them from the perspective of the other children. Once they are aware of the reasons for this policy, they generally respect it and help us maintain this policy.

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

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

Preferably, the early dropped off children start their day in the backyard unless it's too windy or too rainy. If you choose to come inside, prepare activities that involve a lot of movement. 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.

Outdoor Time (Hayaat)

If we are the first person going to the backyard, we prepare the backyard for the rest of the day. Every time a class leaves the backyard, if we are the last person with the early morning children, we make sure to put everything used back in its place.

Every teacher in the backyard is assigned a specific section to monitor and maintain. **To set a good example and keep a positive environment, we try to be in constant action.** We do something productive and useful. This will directly and indirectly motivate children to play positively, engage with you in Persian and not feel constantly watched. We can clean your area, fix things or create new activities. Also we multiply our efforts in practicing the language immersion methods to keep Persian in the backyard.

At Golestan talking among teachers in the backyard is not OK – even if discussing work related matters – the backyard serves as an outdoor free play area where teachers still serve as an example and aside from important safety issues, each teacher’s level of engagement will affect the games that children create.

This is not a time to chat. Not only is it unsafe, but if the children see teachers disperse when someone enters the yard, they perceive it to be deceptive behavior. It doesn’t matter whether we’re talking about school related issues or not – there should never be more than two teachers standing next to each other at one time in the backyard.

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.

- We 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 we give recognition for the food we are given (a song or a phrase) and that we start eating all at the same time (children above 4 years old).
- We choose a seat where we 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.

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

At Golestan we do not compare children’s eating behavior nor give an opinion about how they eat. 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.

Lunchtime is a shared time 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. We keep in mind that 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, we gently motivate him/her to focus more on eating. Conversely, if a child eats too fast, we 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.

You can raise awareness for clean eating by giving asking each child to take a look around his/her chair and see how much food has been dropped – When appropriate, please ask them to participate in cleaning the table around their plate before putting clearing their dishes.

As always, the teachers must set a good example for proper table manners.



Communication

Communication is instrumental in creating a functional and healthy community. At Golestan, a primary goal is to create a happy and joyful environment for the children to learn and thrive. In order to achieve this goal, teachers and administration participate in weekly, monthly, and seasonal staff meetings.

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 versus bad, right versus wrong, and kind vs unkind through their everyday interactions and observations. It is very important that the teacher helps each child to learn from these experiences through a discrete, thoughtful, and respectful communication. If communicating about a particular behavior, please 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.

We never praise anything extrinsic or superficial such as a drawing “what a beautiful house!” or a dress “what a beautiful dress!” If we feel a child is seeking praise from us, we 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 today.”

We never tell a child s/he’s smart. We praise hard work and remind them 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.

It goes without saying that **we never comment on a child’s physical beauty.** We can tell them that they look strong and healthy because they eat well, or that they have kind eyes, but we do 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 we (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 – we 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.

At Golestan, we are always truthful with parents. Situations are not 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 circumstances, 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 with respect for each person's individuality and perspective. These are also opportunities to not only help our fellow colleagues, but to serve as a positive role model for the children. If we have a habit that we are trying to overcome, we can ask your fellow co-workers to help us with the use of or non-verbal cues and/or uninhibited dialogue. Also if we see that another class or a colleague is having a hard time and we are able to help, we offer our assistance. If a colleague offers help we are open to receiving it graciously. Conversely, if we feel it would be more disruptive than beneficial to accept help, we can politely (and kindly) decline without concern for hurt feelings. The children must always come first – we must not let inhibitions get in the way of the children's best interest.

At Golestan we are 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, we do not take it personally; rather we listen carefully and objectively and try to understand that person's perspective. If necessary, we can ask for time to digest the information and give ourselves some time to process before reacting. Always remember that our colleagues' goals are shared – everyone is encouraged to communicate proactively and openly but out of kindness, respect, and consideration.

If ever we observe a teacher not abiding by the guidelines outlined in this document or discussed in staff meetings, we can make eye contact with him/her and gently tug our own ear as a discreet non-verbal means of getting his/her attention. If we all practice this 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: There are regular weekly small team meetings between the Executive Director and all staff. There is also a monthly staff meeting where all staff and volunteers are expected to attend and participate. Quarterly staff development days are also mandatory for all employees and volunteers.

Golestan's administration is here to serve and support you – any issues or questions that cannot be resolved personally should be brought to the organization's administration. **If there is a conflict with a colleague, we are encouraged to *first discuss it directly with that individual*.** If either of us feels the issue has not been adequately resolved, then it is our responsibility to take it to the Executive Director to help us find a way to resolve the issue. All conversations are strictly confidential unless noted otherwise. The Executive Director's office should be viewed as a safe haven – a place where we can freely express our feelings, concerns, questions, or conflicts without judgment or consequence.

Finding a Substitute

If you are sick and/or need to take time off, it is the teachers responsibility to find a substitute to fill your shift at Golestan. In order to make sure everything is clear we have a specific procedure to follow.

Substitute Procedure:

1. Please 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 (Use the 'Employee Contact Sheet' Google Doc)
3. Send an e-mail addressed to:
 - administrative team (admin@golestankids.com)
 - 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 please make sure to write down the specific date and time that the substitute or substitute(s) will be filling in for you. Also **please consult the employee handbook regarding leaves of absence.**

Housekeeping

We all treat Golestan as we would your own home. 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 runs the dishwasher, runs a load of towels (unless it's a Friday), closes all windows, turns off all lights and fans and takes 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). At Golestan we practice the culture of recycling.
- Toys and puzzles are *always* assembled before being put away.
- Always have children 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 you are assigned a new volunteer or teacher-in-training, or if there is an outside or Colab observer in your class, please ask her/him to sit in a discreet corner and to observe without interacting with the children. We cannot have every visitor interact with our students without filling requisite paperwork and background checks.

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 one's vocation, rather a way of life
"Education is not preparation for life; Education is life itself."

John Dewey