

CHILDREN'S
MONTESSORI
PRESCHOOL, LLC



1060 Nugget St.
Los Alamos, NM 87544
505-661-4018

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PARENT HANDBOOK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mission and philosophy statements.....	page 3
Children's Montessori Preschool curriculum statement.....	page 3
What services does Children's Montessori Preschool offer?.....	page 3
What do I need to do to enroll my child?.....	page 3
How much does the program cost?.....	page 4
What supplies do I need to send with my child?.....	page 4
Tuition payment procedures.....	page 4
What if I need to change the days or hours my child attends?.....	page 4
Confidentiality statement.....	page 5
What is the schedule of the day?.....	page 5
What if I'm late dropping my child off?.....	page 5
What if I'm late picking my child up?.....	page 5
What if I need to pick my child up early?.....	Page 5
What if someone else is picking up my child?.....	Page 6
What if my child is going to be absent?.....	page 6
What if my child is sick?.....	page 6
What if my child needs to take medication while at school?.....	page 6
What happens if my child gets sick at school?.....	page 6
What is the best way to say goodbye?.....	page 7
What are the school's expectations of me?.....	page 7
How can I best communicate with the school?.....	page 8
Who can I contact if I have a complaint?.....	Page 8
How will I know how my child is doing?.....	page 8
Discharge policy.....	page 8
How should my child dress for school?.....	page 9
Can my child bring items from home?.....	page 9
How are snacks handled?.....	page 9
What if my child stays for lunch?.....	page 9
Does the school celebrate students' birthdays and holidays?.....	page 9
Can I come observe during the school day?.....	page 10
What if it snows on a school day?.....	page 10
How is discipline handled?.....	page 10
What is the procedure if my child is injured at school?.....	page 10
What about other incidents?.....	page 11
Emergency Evacuations procedures.....	page 11-12
Reporting incidents to the authorities.....	page 12
Does the school take field trips?.....	page 12
Subject areas covered in a Montessori classroom.....	page 12- 13

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Children's Montessori Preschool is to foster the physical, emotional, and mental growth of each child, helping to foster a love of learning and independence in children ages three to five years.

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Children learn by exploring their environment and experimenting through play. There is a direct link between a child's environment and his development. The staff of Children's Montessori Preschool will strive to create a safe and healthy environment that offers consistency while responding to the changing skills and interests of the children in order to promote physical, intellectual and social growth. The Montessori philosophy of teaching children through their will facilitate the growth of inner discipline and the ability for later complex reasoning through free-choice and organized use of didactic materials. We believe the preschool experience is the building block for all later learning, as everything a child under the age of six learns is stored in his subconscious forever, making a foundation for concepts he will be presented with later in life.

CURRICULUM STATEMENT

We are dedicated to the Montessori philosophy and method of education through the senses and play. Children will develop inner discipline and gain the ability for later complex reasoning through the free choice and organized use of didactic materials. Children may choose work and experiment with materials from our NAEYC approved curriculum. Children will receive a well rounded educational experience through participation in art, science, language, math, geography, zoology, history, practical life activities, foreign languages, music, dance and movement. We have integrated role playing areas into our classroom through dramatic play, blocks, books and manipulative to further help develop social and emotional development.

WHAT SERVICES DOES CHILDREN'S MONTESSORI PRESCHOOL OFFER?

Children's Montessori Preschool is located at 1060 Nugget Street in Los Alamos. We are licensed by the New Mexico Children, Youth, and Families Department. The preschool program runs Monday through Friday from 8:30 - 11:30 a.m. Children may stay for lunch (until 12:30) any day they attend preschool. Children may attend either three or five days per week. The school is licensed for 24 children each day.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO ENROLL MY CHILD?

Before a child may enroll at Children's Montessori Preschool he or she must meet the following requirements:

- visit the school to meet the teachers and become familiar with the environment
- be at least 3 years of age and potty trained
- have current inoculations and have proof on file with the school (REQUIRED BY LAW)
- complete all paperwork and turn into directress before the first day (registration form, enrollment agreement, and carpool form)
- pay \$100.00 registration fee and \$200.00 supply fee (these fees are non-refundable)
- pay first month's tuition (the enrollment agreement describes the fees you will be charged each month)

Children's Montessori Preschool does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies and other school related programs.

HOW MUCH DOES THE PROGRAM COST?

The monthly tuition costs are as follows (price includes all applicable taxes):

	Preschool	Preschool +1 hr
	8:30 - 11:30	8:30 - 12:30
5 days/week	\$470.00	\$660.00
3 days/week	\$332.00	\$446.00

OTHER FEES:

If you are early dropping off (before 8:30) or late picking up your child (after 11:30, or 12:30 if your child stays for lunch), you will be billed at the non-contracted rate of \$10.00 per hour.

There will be a \$30.00 fee for checks returned for any reason.

If you need to withdraw your child from our program, you will be charge an early termination of contract fee of \$375.00 plus one month’s tuition.

Please retain your statements for tax purposes. If you need a new statement, there will be a \$5.00 service charge for each statement.

WHAT SUPPLIES DO I NEED TO SEND WITH MY CHILD?

- an extra set of clothing (including underwear and socks) labeled with your child’s name and in a plastic bag
- a pair of slippers labeled with his/her name that will stay at school
- all other supplies are purchased by the school with the supply fee money

TUITION PAYMENT PROCEDURE

- payments are due for month on the first day of the month (ex. payment for September is due on September 1st)
- payments are considered late if they are not received before the 10th of the month
- a late payment charge of \$25.00 will be assessed on the 10th, and an additional \$10.00 per day will accrue until payment is received. These charges appear on the next month’s bill.
- payments can be deposited in the mailbox in the classroom or can be mailed to 1060 Nugget St., Los Alamos, NM 87544
- there are no refunds for absences
- you are not charged for days the school is closed for holidays. You will be billed the same amount every month, regardless of the number of days we have school to assist you with your budget. The only time your bill will be different is if you have accrued late payment charges or have extra charges for late pickup or early drop off.

WHAT IF I NEED TO CHANGE THE HOURS OR DAYS MY CHILD ATTENDS?

If you need to change your child’s schedule, a \$75.00 processing fee will be assessed on your next bill. Changes will only be approved if there is space available.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

All students' records are strictly confidential. Only Children's Montessori Preschool personnel and officials from the NM Children, Youth and Families Department will have access to the information listed in your child's file. We will ask your permission before sharing your names and phone numbers with other parents in the Children's Montessori Preschool phonebooks.

WHAT IS THE SCHEDULE EACH DAY?

8:15- 8:45 Outside time

8:45 - 11:00 Class time - teaching monthly curriculum

11:00-11:45 Recess outside/pick up at 11:30

11:45 - 12:30 Lunch

WHAT IF I'M LATE DROPPING MY CHILD OFF?

Please help your child develop the trait of promptness by setting a good example. We are first and foremost a school - we are building your child's foundation for his entire education. Our curriculum begins at **8:30 a.m.** and late arrivals disturb the continuity of the school day. If your child cannot be at school by 8:45 a.m. please keep him home. Exceptions will be made for situations such as traffic accidents or inclement weather. Remember: your child cannot keep up with your quick pace (it takes them longer to do everything from getting dressed to putting on a seat belt!) Plan plenty of time in the morning to eliminate the stress and tension you and your child both feel when you are rushed. Remember the Golden Rule: treat your child as you would want to be treated.

WHAT IF I'M LATE PICKING MY CHILD UP?

Children who are not picked up at their scheduled time will be billed for extra time at the non-contracted daycare rate. If a parent is extremely late (more than 15 minutes without calling), the staff will call both parents to make sure someone will be picking the child up. If a parent cannot be reached by staff members, the emergency contact person will be called to pick the child up. Please make sure Children's Montessori Preschool has current phone numbers for both parents home, work and cell phones, as well as current emergency contacts.

WHAT IF I NEED TO PICK UP EARLY?

Please notify the teachers of the change by filling out a datagram. If you are taking your child out early, please note that children will not be allowed to return to school that day. Children arriving and leaving at non-transition times can be very disruptive to the learning process of not only your child but to every other child in the classroom. Please try to schedule pick-ups during transition times. Please check with the teachers to find a time that will work best for your schedule.

WHAT IF SOMEONE ELSE IS GOING TO PICK MY CHILD UP?

Please make sure you have the person listed on your permission to transport form (also known as the carpool form) in your child's file. Fill out a datagram with the name of the person your child will be leaving with, along with the person's telephone number in case of emergency. Please be sure to complete this form every time someone else is picking up your child or your child will not be released to that person. In addition, please make sure the person has some form of ID as further protection for your child.

WHAT IF MY CHILD IS GOING TO BE ABSENT (ILLNESS OR VACATION)?

If your child is going to be absent for any reason, we request you notify the school. In the event of an illness, please call the school before 8:30 a.m. We must notify other parents if their children have been exposed to a contagious illness. In the event of a vacation, please notify the school by datagram of the dates your child will be out of school. You will not receive credit for days your child is absent due to illness or vacation.

WHAT IF MY CHILD IS SICK?

While there is a need to instill the value of education at a young age, children who are sick need to stay home so that they do not make others sick. Please use your good judgment.

Children must stay home if they exhibit:

***fever**

***diarrhea**

***vomiting**

***ectoplasm from his/her nose**

In the event of a communicable disease (I.e. chicken pox, strep throat, pink eye, croup, etc.) the school must be notified according to state law so that other parents can be notified that their child has been exposed. Your child may not return to school until he has been fever or symptom free for 24 hours, or 24 hours after the last bout of diarrhea, vomiting or starting medications. If your child has received immunizations, including flu shots, he must stay home for 24 hours afterward. If your child leaves during the day for a doctor's or dentist appointment, s/he will not be allowed to return to school.

WHAT IF MY CHILD NEEDS TO TAKE MEDICATION WHILE AT SCHOOL?

Should medication need to be administered during the time your child is in school, you will need to fill out a medicine administration form. This form outlines the type of medication, doses, times and dates to administer, and date to discontinue medication, as well as the parent's authorization for the teacher to give the child the medicine. You will need to sign another form each day at pick up time verifying the medication was given to your child.

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD GETS SICK AT SCHOOL?

If your child develops a fever or begins vomiting or having diarrhea while at school, you will be called to come pick your child up promptly. Please make sure your registration form has a current number where you or an alternate can be reached in case of illness or emergency. No voice mail numbers or alternates who live outside of Los Alamos/White Rock please. Children who become sick at school need to be picked up as quickly as possible to minimize exposure to the other children.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO SAY GOODBYE?

You and your child will become familiar with the environment at your first visit, therefore we recommend when you bring your child to school you make your good bye as brief as possible. A prolonged farewell can create uncertainty and unnecessary difficulty in separation from the parent. Make it a consistent, repetitive procedure: your jobs as the parent are to read the announcement board, punch your child in, and say goodbye. Let your child put away his own coat and lunch, and get his nametag. Establishing a routine will make saying goodbye easier on your child, as he learns what to expect and feels in control of the situation. It is also best to avoid the “sneak away” approach as it damages your child’s trust in you. Children may become frightened if they turn around expecting to see you and then realize you have left. If you are having trouble in this area with your child, we will work with you to help find a resolution to the problems.

WHAT ARE THE SCHOOL’S EXPECTATIONS OF ME?

There are certain jobs for you and your child each morning. The school expects you, the parent or guardian to do the following:

- read the announcement board every day
- punch your child in and out (please punch in before bringing him to the playground, and pick him up before punching out) initial the card after you punch in and out
- call the school if your child will be absent for any reason
- make sure your child is wearing appropriate clothing - is he wearing something he can get out of himself to go to the bathroom? Is it appropriate for the weather conditions? Does he need a coat, hat, gloves, boots or a snowsuit today?
- bring your child on time. School begins at 8:30. Arriving late is disruptive to the class and is unfair to your child. Children will not be allowed to come into class after 8:45. We understand there are times when it is impossible to arrive on time, however, please do your best to respect our beginning and ending times.
- make sure the staff has current phone numbers (home, work and cell phones) for both parents, and also for all emergency contact persons. If you will be at an alternate location (ex. playdate) please leave a datagram with the number where you can be reached. Always put requests to the teachers in writing. If your child will be out for vacation, needs to stay later than usual, will be going home with another adult, will be leaving early, etc., please fill out a datagram. Teachers do not always remember everything parents tell them at drop off or pick up times. Thank you!
- parents are welcome to come talk to the children about their jobs when we discuss careers in October, and are welcome to come to school celebrations for birthdays and holidays. Always check the parent newsletter and announcement board for these activities.
- always talk positively about school and teachers at home. Negative comments at home directly affect your child’s behavior at school.

HOW CAN I BEST COMMUNICATE WITH THE SCHOOL?

The teachers want to serve your needs as well as those of your child, thus all important information will be either mailed directly to you, placed in your parent mailbox, or posted on the announcement board. Conversations with the teachers are difficult during school hours as their attention needs to be focused on the well-being of the children. Please fill out a datagram anytime you have information you need to tell the teacher (ie. changes to who is picking up the child, the need for a parent conference, comments, etc.) These forms can also be used for address or telephone number changes, to notify us when you are on travel, or for planned absences. These datagrams should then be placed on the attendance clipboard. You can find blank datagrams on the side of the file cabinet.

WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE A COMPLAINT?

Should you have problems or complaints regarding your child's care, please use a datagram to request a conference. You may also call the Ms. Shelli or Ms. Melanie at 661-4018 or put your concerns in writing. The staff will make every effort to address any concerns to the best of their abilities. If you feel your complaint has not been addressed in a timely manner, you may contact Melissa Romero, NMCYFD at (505) 827-1259.

HOW WILL I KNOW HOW MY CHILD IS DOING?

Your child will bring home papers, projects, booklets and artwork. Staff members may also send home photos of work your child has done in the classroom. You will receive a progress report for your child towards the end of the school year.

DISCHARGE POLICY

You will be asked to sign an enrollment agreement at the beginning of each school year. This agreement is binding for the entire school year (usually running from August through May) and/or any portion of a summer program. This agreement can be terminated for any of the following:

- tuition is delinquent by more than one month
- Children's Montessori Preschool determines it is unable to meet the needs of the child
- Failure of the child to adjust to life at Children's Montessori Preschool after a reasonable amount of time
- Children's Montessori Preschool determines it is not in the best interest of Children's Montessori Preschool or the other children enrolled to have the child in attendance. This includes incidents where a child is endangering the safety and well being of the teachers and/or other children.
- Failure of parents to cooperate with Children's Montessori Preschool, in which the issue is determined to be serious enough to warrant termination.
- Parental Termination. Children's Montessori Preschool must be notified in writing 30 days prior to the last day of school along with an early termination fee of \$375.00 plus one month's tuition.

HOW SHOULD MY CHILD DRESS FOR SCHOOL?

Please help your child toward success and independence by providing clothing that he can do by himself. Sometimes an outfit may be cute but accidents occur if the child can't get out of his clothes to use the restroom, and then he feels unsuccessful. Your child's clothing should be practical for the day's weather conditions. All children should have an extra set of clothing labeled with their name in case they should need to change for any reason.

CAN MY CHILD BRING ITEMS FROM HOME?

Please discourage your child from bringing money, candy and toys to school. If there is an item of special educational interest your child wants to share with the class, s/he may bring it on his/her assigned sharing day. You will receive a list of these days at the beginning of each semester.

HOW ARE SNACKS HANDLED?

Snacks are purchased by the school. You will be billed a snack fee each month, pro-rated for the number of days your child attends Children's Montessori Preschool. Snack items served include graham crackers, hot dogs, carrots, pretzels, goldfish crackers, cheerios, cheese and crackers, fruit snacks, and muffins. Milk, juice or water is offered at snack as well. Each child has a turn to be snack host. This is the same day as his sharing day. Serving snack to his classmates is important in the development of your child's good manners and the value of helping others. This snack experience helps build a sense of community and learning manners. Snack is also used to teach grace and courtesy lessons.

WHAT IF MY CHILD STAYS DURING LUNCH?

- lunches need to be brought from home
- make sure your child's lunch is packed in a lunch box or sack with their name clearly visible. Remember, without a name, we won't know who the lunch belongs to.
- pack the food so it is ready for your child to eat (include utensils when needed, peel oranges or hard boiled eggs, prepare heated meals and send in a thermos). We cannot heat everyone's lunch in a microwave, so please do not send items that need to be heated.
- remember to include a drink
- please do not send soda, gum, candy or chocolate cake

DOES THE SCHOOL CELEBRATE STUDENT'S BIRTHDAYS AND HOLIDAYS?

Montessori has a special birthday celebration that teaches children the concept of time. We ask that you bring in a picture of your child at birth, one year, two years, etc. so that we can create a personalized time line for your child. You are invited to attend the birthday walk ceremony in which your child will walk around the "sun" (a yellow candle) holding the "earth" (a globe) as many times as how old s/he is (teaching the concept that it takes one year for the earth to go around the sun) while the teacher tells the other children the story of your child's life. We get this information from the birthday sheet you will receive before your child's birthday. Please include information that your child might remember, such as "Grandma M. came to my birthday party when I was two." Children's Montessori Preschool also has special celebrations at other times of the year which are announced in the monthly newsletter.

WHAT IF IT SNOWS ON A SCHOOL DAY?

We follow the Los Alamos Public schools for declarations of snow days. In the event of a one hour delay, we will open at 9:30 and school will end at 11:30 (or 12:30 if it is a lunch day). If a two hour delay is called, there will be no school that day. You can check any of the local television stations for the delay reports, or you can call the LAPS snow line at 663-2223

CAN I COME OBSERVE DURING THE SCHOOL DAY?

You are welcome to come and observe our classroom anytime. We maintain an open-door policy and encourage all parents to come visit sometime throughout the year. When you are observing please be as inconspicuous as possible so that you can see all of the wonderful things the children are doing. We have a handout for you to help when you come to observe.

HOW IS DISCIPLINE HANDELED?

Respect for people and property is of utmost importance in a Montessori classroom. The child is taught to be courteous and respectful to both classmates and adults through grace and courtesy lessons. Many discipline problems can be prevented through very simple procedures:

- scheduling and structuring the day
- appropriate expectations of the children
- giving clear directions and asking the child to do only one thing at a time
- telling the children what to do, rather than what not to do (I.e. please walk)
- listening to the child and observing them
- redirecting the child before he makes a poor choice

Inappropriate behavior is discouraged through similar techniques:

- structuring the environment
- redirecting the child's behavior - perhaps repeatedly
- appropriate time out management (separating the child from others but with the care giver, in a positive way. This gives the child time to collect him/herself and discuss his/her actions. Time out periods should not be longer than the age of the child I.e. a three-year-old would get a three minute time out.) Time out should be used sparingly - it loses effectiveness if overused.
- following through - consistency is important
- immediate response to behavior

Negative discipline practices such as yelling, making threats, hitting and embarrassing or humiliating the child are not used:

- they do not teach the child what to do
- they do not change long term behavior, only behavior that will be observed by the disciplinarian or authority figure.
- may harm the relationship between the child and the caregiver

If your child exhibits extreme misbehavior, you may be called to come pick him or her up. Behavior which involves one child hurting another will not be tolerated and may result in suspension, considering the circumstances involved. The length of the suspension will be determined by the directress and shall be reasonable to fit the unacceptable behavior.

WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE IF MY CHILD IS INJURED AT SCHOOL?

In case of a serious injury or illness, an ambulance will be called to transport your child to the hospital. Your child will be accompanied by a staff member if allowed, and another staff member will contact you or the person listed as an emergency contact on your registration form. Please be sure the names, telephone numbers, and addresses of all the children's physicians, hospitals and dentists are up to date along with your emergency, home and work phone numbers and alternate contact persons. Please make sure any alternates lists live here in town. A grandmother in Toledo cannot come to school or the hospital quickly if needed. Also, please note that your or your family insurance will be responsible for the cost of medical help or treatment due to accidents or illness if your child has to be transported to the doctor directly from Children's Montessori Preschool.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER INCIDENTS?

In case of an accident such as a bump on the head or a skinned knee:

- first aid will be administered
- you will be called if your child needs to be picked up
- a staff member will file an accident report which you can read sign when you pick your child up. An accident report will be filed any time an injury involves the head or visible bruising.

In the unlikely event that a child is missing an immediate search of the grounds will be initiated. If the child cannot be located after this initial search, the police and the child's parents will be notified so a search of the neighborhood and surrounding areas may begin.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES

In the event of an emergency requiring evacuation of the premises (fire, bomb threat, flooding, gas leak, etc.) the following procedures will take effect:

1. Police will be contacted regarding the nature of the emergency.
2. Children will be evacuated from the building through the fire exits, following procedures practiced during fire drills. Staff members will gather the clipboard and escort the children to the agreed upon evacuation point. Evacuation points on the church property are the grass on the southeast side of the building and the north east side of the building. Should the evacuation require leaving the property, children will be informed that they will be going on a special trip. They will not be given specific details about the emergency that could frighten them.
3. Should the children need to leave the premises completely, they will be escorted either to The Ark or Los Alamos High School. The directress or lead teacher will contact one of the above facilities to arrange for use of space, if an alternate site has not already been arranged by emergency personnel. Should the emergency require the entire town to be evacuated, we will follow the recommendations of Public Safety Officials. Should there be a child or children whose parents cannot pick them up, the school has access to a van with car seats to transport some children to a designated evacuation point.
4. The Emergency phone tree will be activated to alert parents to the evacuation. All parents will be given a copy of the phone list at the beginning of the school year. Parent volunteers will be in charge of helping to notify the other parents as to the situation.

5. Parents will be given a choice (if it is feasible) to either pick their children up, or allow them to wait at the evacuation point until the building is safe to return to.

6. When Public Safety Officials have declared the building (or town) safe to return to, the school will resume normal operations.

In the even that the emergency is such that the police are the first to notify the school, not vice-versa, we will follow official's recommendations regarding evacuation. The phone tree will be activated as soon as possible.

In case of a medical emergency involving serious injury or illness, an ambulance will be called to transport the child to the hospital. Parents or an emergency contact will be notified immediately. The child will be accompanied by a staff member if allowed.

REPORTING OF INCIDENTS TO AUTHORITIES

In compliance with State regulations, any occurrence which has or could threaten the health, safety or well being of a child will be reported to the proper authorities. These occurrences include:

- a lost or missing child
- sexual or physical abuse
- child neglect
- accidents or injuries requiring medical care
- any natural disaster affecting the school grounds which poses a health hazard
- communicable diseases

If you suspect a child is being abused, call NM CYFD protective services at 505-827-7450.

DOES THE SCHOOL TAKE FIELD TRIPS?

While field trips can be a valuable educational experience for children who have entered elementary school, preschool age children benefit most from consistency in their environment. Children of this age do much better visiting zoos and museums with a family member than with teachers. Also, the safety of the children in our care is always of the utmost importance and ensuring their safety becomes much more difficult away from the school grounds.

SUBJECT AREAS COVERED IN A MONTESSORI CLASSROOM

PRACTICAL LIFE: The youngest children begin in the practical life area of the classroom where such exercises as pouring, washing dishes, overcoming the difficulties of dressing oneself (ie tying, zipping, snapping, buttoning, etc.), increasing the child's attention span and concentration. Additionally, these exercises develop both gross and fine motor coordination and enable the child to experience satisfaction over mastery of the exercise and completion of the task.

SENSORIAL: A child learns through his/her senses (ie visual, auditory, gustatory, tactile, olfactory, stereognostic). By providing interrelated sensorial materials, the child is guided through a series of exercises involving comparing skills. Initially, the comparisons are great and gradually become more subtle.

MATH: Starting with basic materials to distinguish symbol from quantity, the child uses materials which teach underlying concepts of math. All four basic operations are introduced and repeated through fun games.

LANGUAGE: Before the child is taught to distinguish differences in letters, s/he is encouraged to master duplicate pictures, sequencing, matching, rhyming, opposites, puzzles, attribute cards, and listening readiness. These activities combine to give the child pre-reading skills, which are then utilized in learning the basic phonetic sounds through the senses. When the child is ready, s/he will begin to build simple words. As the child progresses, sentences are then constructed with the moveable alphabet and ultimately the parts of speech, grammar and syntax are studied.

SCIENCE: Montessori's method has its base in scientific observation. The mysteries of the universe unfold to the child through simple scientific experiments (sink and float, magnetism, and kitchen chemistry) through more long term activities such as building a solar system.

ZOOLOGY/BOTANY The child begins with the concept of living and non-living and throughout the year learns to classify the plant and animal kingdoms. The child also learns to care for plants and animals through classroom pets and plants in the room.

GEOGRAPHY: A series of globes assists the child in distinguishing land and water forms, progressing to the continents that make up our world. Various activities teach the child about individual countries, including topography, climate and culture. Studies of land forms provide an understanding of the geographic features that distinguish each country.

HISTORY: A concrete presentation through pictorial time lines makes history interesting. The child begins with his/her own personal time line. Time lines of other subjects eventually lead to an understanding of the time line of all history.

ART: A variety of media is available to encourage self-expression. Beginning with the primary colors, the child explores secondary colors, as well as hues. Individual and group projects are encouraged. We have arts and crafts classes once per week.

MUSIC: Music notation and theory are presented as the child is ready. Group music includes music appreciation, songs, dancing and rhythm instruments.

HEALTH AND FITNESS: The importance of good nutrition, regular exercise and stress reduction are taught to the child using the Fitness for Life program which incorporates the Tasty Triangle, the Workout Wheel, and the Animal Action Stretching game.

SOCIALIZATION: Social development is just as important as the academic development. Academic skills can't be implemented without social tools. Social skills help establish the foundations for respecting others and aid in language development.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE: We use Dora the Explorer books, videos and games to teach the children Spanish. Spanish classes are conducted once per week.