



PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Our philosophy of education encompasses a vision of the child; the respective roles of the student, teacher, and environment; and our core values. It is a mission statement that informs our teaching practices and methodologies and will continue to guide our approaches in education, mentoring, teaching, and learning.

We view all children as valuable and worthy of dignity and respect. Children deserve unconditional positive regard, nurture, love, acceptance, empathy, and compassion. We view the child as intrinsically curious, creative, and competent with unlimited potential. We believe all children have a right to a high-quality education led by energetic, passionate, and dedicated teachers who demonstrate an unwavering commitment to supporting each child's holistic growth as they develop a sense of autonomy, self-awareness, and self-worth.

Students need the opportunity to practice all developmental skills (social-emotional, physical, cognitive, language, social sciences, mathematics, and science and technology) in authentic situations within the context of a safe, supportive, and positive classroom environment. We believe social-emotional learning and development is the foundation of higher-level learning, thought, and reasoning. The basis of social-emotional learning develops within the context of healthy relationships and secure attachment with primary caregivers (both families and teachers). Students need a secure base in which they feel safe, seen, and soothed to access their capacity for learning. Students learn best when they feel connected, supported, and a sense of belonging within the classroom community.

We believe the teacher's paramount purpose is to provide a structured environment that creates a safe space to nurture emerging relationships and facilitate secure attachment. The teacher creates a relationship-driven learning environment that empowers children to safely express their thoughts, ideas, opinions, and feelings. The teacher encourages students to openly share their beliefs, observations, and questions as they embark on a self-guided exploration of both their physical environment and their immediate social community. The teacher accomplishes this through facilitating discussions and scaffolding responses so that children learn how to constructively communicate with others (both peers and adults). This approach teaches students to be open to others' perspectives and thoughts, encourages confidence in clearly articulating their ideas, and the ability to respectfully assert their needs.

The teacher demonstrates the value of the student's ideas through whole-hearted presence, deep listening, and mindfulness. The teacher authentically models patience, understanding, empathy, and compassion. In essence, the teacher communicates with the child *"I am here with you. You are important, and I value you."* The teacher's role is to inspire, motivate, encourage, and support all children as they develop into their unique personalities and establish their sense of self-worth. The teacher instills values of respect for the environment (both living and nonliving) and teaches children to respect, embrace, and celebrate the differences among us. Teachers encourage students

to expand upon their thoughts by conveying genuine interest in the child's interests and experiences. To accomplish this, the teacher creates an atmosphere built on principles of community, cohesiveness, and collaboration. In the classroom, the teacher reinforces messages that communicate *"We stick together. We are here together, and we are in this together."*

We believe that teaching provides an opportunity for continual learning, growth, and transformation. Teaching is a life-long learning experience; it is the process of learning from your students, co-teachers, families, and the larger community. The role of the teacher is to foster intrinsic motivation and ignite a passion for learning. The teacher accomplishes this by modeling enthusiasm and interest in learning. In the classroom, the teacher is a co-learner and collaborates with the child. The teacher serves as a guide, providing access to information and teaching critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The teacher provides activities that are relevant to the student's experiences and interests while allowing sufficient time to use materials and space to organically engage in meaningful discussion.

We believe in student-centered, self-directed, play-based and project-based experiential learning that provides students the opportunity to explore, observe, hypothesize, question, discuss, clarify, and understand the world around them. We believe students should have autonomy and shared control over their environment and learning. Students' natural curiosity and choices will guide and direct their learning. The curriculum should be responsive to a child's emerging interests, needs, thoughts, observations, and inquiries. The teacher must be flexible and adaptable in their approach, methodology, and instructional formats. The teacher provides children with opportunities to demonstrate creative self-expression through open-ended process art and sensory experiences. In the classroom, the student is expected and encouraged to candidly speak their mind, contribute ideas, ask questions, explore their environment, and develop meaningful relationships.

Our work as teachers and educators encompasses a greater therapeutic opportunity for all our children to acquire the necessary skills that best promote healing and holistic growth and development. We operate from a strengths-based, trauma-informed perspective that incorporates evidence-based practices and research from multidisciplinary fields of neuroscience, education, social work, and human services.