



# Escuela Viva Parent Handbook

# Escuela Viva School Calendar

Please check the calendar page on our website for specific dates

[www.escuela-viva.com/calendar](http://www.escuela-viva.com/calendar)

<b>September</b>	Labor Day - No School Fall Term Begins
<b>October</b>	Teacher In-Service - No School (annual teaching team retreat) Fall Parent Teacher Conferences - No school for two days
<b>November</b>	Thanksgiving Break - No School (Thursday/Friday)
<b>December</b>	Winter Break - No School for one week
<b>January</b>	New Years Day - No School
<b>February</b>	Enrollment process for current and new families
<b>March</b>	Spring Break - No School for one week
<b>April</b>	All School Pride Days (2) – Volunteer work days Teacher In-Service Day - No School
<b>May</b>	Spring Parent Teacher Conferences - No school for two days Memorial Day - No School
<b>June</b>	Annual Grand Celebration
<b>July</b>	Summer Break – School closed for one week (1st week in July)
<b>August</b>	Teacher In-Service Day - No School

**Look on your child's classroom parent board and at Kaymbu announcements for the following dates:**

- Class Field Trips
- Family Potlucks
- Special Celebrations
- Parent Teacher Conferences (Fall & Spring)
- Classroom and community events or special activities

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to the Escuela Viva family. Escuela Viva is a dual language school where we, as a community, teach, model and foster confidence, compassionate education, creative learning, diversity, healthy living, and community membership. We consider ourselves a strong vibrant community where we strive to incorporate family values, communication, and a sense of belonging to all that we do. In order to be successful we must all work collaboratively, as parents, teachers, and students to achieve this mission.

It has been critical to our success at Escuela Viva that parents who have chosen to enroll their children here have done so because they share the same values as we do. What is valued at home is naturally valued at school. The home environment, including respect shown to family members, habits and manners, and media exposure allowed, are all brought to school by the child and shared with the rest of the class through the child's behavior. If children are taught at home to respect others, to bless meals, and to be positive, they naturally join into the same activities at school.

Therefore, we have written this handbook to provide guidelines that we as teachers at Escuela Viva encourage families to follow. When school and family are both supporting growth in a positive direction, a wonderful synergy is created for children to develop and to discover their strengths and talents.

## **ABOUT ESCUELA VIVA**

### **Our History**

Escuela-Viva, LLC. first opened it's doors July 2004. Serving 5 children in her remodeled basement, Angie Garcia, the founder of Escuela Viva, LLC. knew the model of quality preschool she was offering would fill a need in the Portland community.

Escuela Viva was born when Angie Garcia could not find the type of preschool experience that she wanted for her daughter (2004). Having had many years experience in both early childhood programs like Head Start as well as experience in other child care settings, Ms. Garcia felt she had a good grasp of what makes a solid nurturing preschool. Escuela-Viva, LLC has expanded and now has one location that offers care for children ages 6 months to 6 years (infant and toddler care, preschool, and pre-kindergarten).

### **Mission Statement**

Escuela Viva is a dual language school where we, as a family, teach, model and foster confidence, compassionate education, creative learning, diversity, healthy living, and community membership.

### **Vision Statement**

We inspire relationships and bonds to provide quality education for all which supports social, ethical and ecological responsibility.

By creating opportunities for individuals to flourish, in our classrooms and in our neighborhoods, we promote social change.

Through balance we learn and grow together as we explore and engage in the many different languages the world has to offer. This process happens all the while sharing in the joys and wonders of life.

### **Escuela Viva's Commitment to Multicultural Anti-Bias Attitudes and Practices**

Escuela Viva is a dual language school where we, as a family, teach, model and foster confidence, compassion, creative learning, healthy living, and community membership. We all work together to create a supportive atmosphere of inclusivity, growth, and mindfulness.

We at Escuela Viva aim to serve all children and families, and create a safe and comfortable place to understand and celebrate differences. As a teaching community, we embrace diversity, encourage each other's ability to confront and counteract bias, and provide resources and ongoing trainings that assist our early childhood professionals in working toward that end. Diversity includes but is not limited to: race, ethnic background, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, and differing physical conditions.

Escuela Viva will not tolerate, and will act swiftly to combat, any discriminatory statements or practices by or among staff, families, or those within our community.

### **Our Philosophy**

#### *How We Work with Children*

Escuela Viva was developed with two main goals in mind. The first is to provide an enriching environment that supports the spiritual, academic and humanistic needs of all children. The second is to support the development of both English and Spanish language skills. As our program is a dual language program, children will be taught in their native language while providing more and more opportunities to hear a second language (Spanish or English). Yet, we never hire solely on the basis of bilingualism, we won't compromise quality for the sake of a bilingual environment.

Early childhood education, like all education, is a "dynamic process". Through our approach, inspired by the work in Reggio Emilia and that of J. Donald Walters (author of "Education for Life"), we go beyond the basic "academics". We teach our children to become active and attentive learners. We do not expect children to "sit still and learn". Rather, they are engaged as active participants in the learning process. In many cases, this occurs through multi-faceted projects that require the mastery and integration of a variety of different skills.

### **Responsive Emergent Curriculum**

At Escuela Viva, we believe that children learn best — and best of all, love learning — when they learn through playing through their own ideas. We believe that children will develop a strong foundation in the skills they need for formal education and for life through their own exploration,

experimentation, and play. We do not use prepackaged curriculum. Instead, we provide opportunities for inquiry and investigation throughout the day based on the emerging interests of the children. We closely observe our students to hypothesize about what skills they are building and what theories about the world they are developing through their play. We offer materials and authentic experiences to help them deepen and broaden their thinking. For example, if we notice the children are spending time banging and rubbing toys together, we may offer more opportunities for the children to experiment with sound and cause and effect; this would likely include adding materials to our classroom that make interesting or unusual noises, as well as offering provocations that specifically encourage noise-making, such as setting out pie tins and rhythm sticks or maracas and strings of bells. How the children respond to these provocations would guide us as we make decisions about the direction we take our curriculum from there.

We recognize and honor each child as a unique individual with their own learning style and areas of interest, and we provide opportunities for learning based on each child's particular affinities, while also taking into account the areas where they may experience more challenges and need more support. We offer materials that support children's skill development in all areas: fine motor, gross motor, social-emotional, cognitive problem-solving and theory development, spatial and mathematical, and literacy and communication. We also support children's social, emotional, and spiritual development. We model and encourage gentleness, generosity, empathy, patience, respect, curiosity, fairness, and joy in our relationships with people, with ourselves, and with our environment. We work closely with families to connect home and school life, including important elements of children's home cultures and traditions in our classroom.

Without compromising the fundamentals, we take a holistic approach to education that enables children to grow towards full maturity. This includes helping children understand how their bodies work, how their emotions affect their behavior, and how to focus their energy in such a way as to enhance learning. As a component of our philosophy use the following guiding principles in our curricular activities, addition of new team members (hiring), administrative practices and community partnerships:

*The guiding principles of Escuela Viva are:*

- Love and respect permeate every aspect of our school community.
- Children are competent active learners.
- Children, parents, teachers, and the environment are partners in the learning process.
- Children are celebrated and empowered when their learning is made visible.
- Children have an amazing capacity to learn language.

The overall goal is that our children grow to understand how to live the best possible life filled with joy and happiness. As an added bonus we incorporate Spanish language learning into our school day. This is done as our teachers share with the students their love for the Spanish language in

conversation and interactions throughout the day. We welcome the opportunity to share our philosophy with you and your children.

### **Our Approach to Spanish**

Our philosophy related to second language acquisition is that children will develop a love for language and become a partner in learning. Nothing can be more frightening than to start your academic career and not understand what your teachers are saying to you. Immersion works well...it just isn't how we approach language learning. There are plenty of moments in your child's life where they will feel pressure to learn. That isn't how we approach any learning at Escuela Viva. We will make the learning, albeit Spanish, a new dance/song, or how to be a contributing member of their classroom, an experience they will carry for a life-time. A time where they were allowed to learn at their pace, their interests were valued, and they felt competent in mind and body.

### **THE ESCUELA VIVA TEAM**

All staff biographies are kept current on the website. Check the website for information regarding our staff: <http://www.escuela-viva.com>

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

#### **Escuela Viva: Pine Street Location**

Address: 1111 SE Pine St Portland Or 97214

Phone Number: 503-282 2091

Directors Email: [director@escuela-viva.com](mailto:director@escuela-viva.com)

#### **Escuela Viva: Wabash/Kenton Location**

Address: 7633 N Wabash Portland Or 97217

Phone Number: 503-477-6905

Directors Email: [director@escuela-viva.com](mailto:director@escuela-viva.com)

## PROGRAMS

Escuela Viva consists of two programs: an Infant/Toddler and Preschool Program which includes an early preschool classroom, preschool and Pre-Kindergarten. Within in these two programs there are five classrooms all together.

***Nutrition.*** We provide morning snack, lunch, and afternoon snack for our children. We work to provide children with a healthy environment including the food that we serve. With inclusion in mind, we have a wholesome, mostly organic-based menu that takes into account the various food allergens. We like to cook with whole grains, serve limited dairy and offer fortified soy milk. As much as we possibly can, we work to accommodate specific allergies and food needs within our own menu. There may be instances when we will ask a family to provide a supplemental item for their child's specific dietary need (i.e. gluten free bread, vegan cheese, etc). It is also part of our mission to make sure and serve foods with low sugar content, no hydrogenated oils, trans fats or high fructose corn syrup.

***Physical Activity.*** Our children are given opportunities to participate in outside activities each day, rain or shine. These activities include playing in our on-site playground, going to the park (where available), gardening, and going on nature walks. We also go on field trips as they relate to what we are learning in our classes.

***Parent Involvement.*** Parent involvement is at the crux of our classroom environment. Our most successful classrooms always include strong partnerships between parents and teachers. As always communicate directly with your child's teachers via the Kaymbu, communication log or email. We are always open to setting up meetings, and to help ensure parents are getting Kaymbu announcements.

When thinking about which classroom your child may be placed in please consider that child placement is not based solely upon age. Developmental factors are also taken into account.



## OUR CLASSES

*“The Reggio Approach is about guiding children’s ideas with provocations, not predetermined curricula...If you can believe in the image of the competent child who can produce theory, then you can understand why the first verb of the Reggio schools is ‘to listen’ (Rinaldi)” Karen DeBord, PhD.*

*“Education for Life is a philosophy of holistic education that emphasizes experiential learning, spiritual development, and practical skills for living...underlying all our academic efforts is the understanding that happy children make the best learners.”  
(edforlife.org)*

Combining these two philosophies we work towards helping our children to be happy, and confident. When children feel that they are loved and valued they have the confidence to be and express themselves, their opinions and feelings, build their own theories, and experiment with them. To top it all off we share with the children our love for the Spanish language.

In each of our classrooms you may find a different interpretation of these philosophies as our teachers, parents, and children learn and work together. Each child, parent and teacher brings with them unique life experiences, strengths, and passions. As these merge together through sharing and learning each class develops. With that said we have a curriculum framework that we work off of that incorporates important emergency preparedness practices, health policies and other state mandated requirements as well as all school traditions. Below is some basic information about each class, techniques that are used, daily routines and basic classroom practices and intentions. We invite you to be a part of your child’s class (see parent participation section for more information).

### **Mariposas – Infants and Wobblers Class**

This classroom model is that of 8 children with two teachers and auxiliary support (TA). The goal of this classroom is to offer a home-like environment that provides for the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs of the infants and wobblers in this classroom. We strive to provide an environment that offers spaces for both quiet and active explorations and a wide range of developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning. The caregiving approach and model we have adopted is with the idea in mind that the relationships we create may emulate the love and respect of their family. Although we could never truly emulate the deep love and respect of a child’s family, with time all Escuela Viva children become an extension of our family. We come to develop deep lasting relationships with the children in our care and do our best to capture this in our regular documentation.

### **A Day in the Mariposas Class**

Infants and young toddlers need responsive caregivers who understand that a routine is so very important for children of all ages; yet a set schedule is not developmentally appropriate for children under two. As responsive caregivers we follow the rhythms of our infants and toddlers. As such

our care-giving follows this rhythm, understanding that any of this may differ for any or all of the children on any given day. Below are the different activities offered on a daily basis at various times in the day.

### **Food**

Snack is offered twice a day, morning and afternoon

Lunch is also provided mid-day

Milks are given as appropriate for individual child (2-3 times a day)

### **Daily Routine**

Diapering throughout the day (every 1-2 hours)

Music and story telling is offered

Outside activity and Gross Motor Development

Books and early literacy experiences

Sensory motor activities

Material exploration and Studio activities

Fine/indoor gross/sensory motor

### **Libelula – Younger Toddler Class**

The *Libelula* Classroom consists of 8 children with two teachers. The goal of this classroom is to offer a comfortable and rich environment that provides for the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs of the toddlers in this classroom. We strive to provide an environment that offers spaces for both quiet and active explorations and a wide range of developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning. The intention of this classroom is also to work with children to support the child in this unique stage of their life as they start to discover themselves as individuals, find language and negotiate relationships. The care-giving approach and model we have adopted is with the idea in mind that the relationships we create may emulate the love and respect of their family. Although we could never truly emulate the deep love and respect of a child's family, with time all Escuela Viva children become an extension of our family. We come to develop deep lasting relationships with the children in our care and do our best to capture this in our documentation.

### **A Day in the Libelula Class**

It is still important for Toddlers to have responsive caregivers. In this classroom the teachers understand that a routine is so very important for children of all ages, though a set schedule is not developmentally appropriate for children under two. Therefore, this classroom is somewhere in between responsive care and structure. The teachers strive to provide a rhythm to the day with structure, consistency and predictability while maintaining the flexibility of working with each child as an individual. Below are the different activities offered on a daily basis at various times in the day.

## **Food**

Snack is offered twice a day, morning and afternoon

Lunch is also provided mid-day.

Milks are given as appropriate for individual child (1-2 times a day)

## **Daily Routines**

Diapering throughout the day (approximately every 2 hours)

Bathroom trips and support with development of bathroom skills

A consistent daily nap time

Music and story-telling is offered

Outside activity and Gross Motor Development

Books and early literacy experiences

Sensory motor activities

Material exploration and Studio activities

Fine and gross motor activities (indoor)

The ***Monitos*** class is for children ages 20-30 months old in September who are ***beginning to work on preschool readiness skills***:

- diaper free
- shoes/pants/coats independently
- using words to communicate
- building relationships, social skills and larger group (community) skills.

The ***Monitos*** class has a maximum of 8 children with a two teacher team, a full time shared TA and the assistance of auxiliary staff to assist during portions of the day. As such it is imperative that children be developmentally ready for the higher child/teacher ratios. All children develop at a different pace and this pace must be honored.

## **A Day In Monitos Class**

In our early preschool program, we are very intentional about creating a classroom environment that promotes the children's sense of inquiry, comfort, competence, and wonder. Each day begins with a Morning Message. While remaining flexible and open to impromptu family visitors, etc., we have a consistent daily routine which includes material and sensory exploration, early literacy opportunities, music, art, yoga and breath-work, cooking/baking projects, community meal times, outdoor play and nature walks, and a daily rest time.

As the children build their bathroom, problem-solving, and independent skills, the teachers encourage the children to take a moment to breathe, pay attention to their bodies, and try to find their own solutions first. Their inquisitive minds fuel our project-based learning and inspire our curriculum, while working daily toward nurturing pro-social skills, empathy, confidence, creativity, and enthusiasm for the Spanish language. At this developmental stage, children are transitioning

from authentic experiences and material exploration to more developed project work that extends their thinking and deepens their collective work.

**Daily Routine:**

Morning Provocations

Outside Activity

Morning Snack

Morning Circle Time

Project Time

Lunch Time

A consistent daily nap/quiet rest time

Afternoon Snack

Outside Activity

**PRESCHOOL PROGRAM**

Children of this age continue to practice and hone their conflict resolution, self-management, and listening skills; while learning about the importance of community. At this stage many of our children are exploring their own gifts and talents, whether it be art, music, reading, drama or constructing. It is our goal to support individual talents and in many cases begin early academic activities (e.g. writing, math, reading, spelling). Many teachers offer yoga and story-telling as additional opportunities to share and learn together.

**Food**

Food is a critical part of your child's experience in the Preschool classrooms. Children are encouraged to try all foods as they learn to develop a palate for various tastes. We also know how important proper nutrition is for your child's educational experiences. As such if you feel it will be helpful, as your child is getting acclimated to the foods offered at Escuela Viva, you may pack a small snack to supplement the *2 snacks and lunch we serve*. We encourage children to "listen to their bodies" and eat when they are hungry. We offer snacks and lunch at a particular time; yet children are always encouraged to seek their snacks when they feel hunger. As we learn to trust children, while offering only healthy food options, children can and do make very healthy choices for their bodies.

**Guidelines for Foods From Home Brought As Supplemental Snacks:**

- Ensure that the snack bag is labeled with your child's name (sharpies work best)
- Ensure that the snack bag is insulated and properly cooled if packing perishable foods
- Please be conscientious of packaged foods as packaged foods have many additives, sugars and preservatives. Additionally, packing adds to waste and we promote sustainability whenever possible.
- Avoid high sugar snacks
- No candy or gum
- No peanuts or tree nuts

### The *Zorritos-Early Preschool class*

**The Zorritos Class** is for children ages 30-36 months old in September who are *actively working on preschool readiness skills*:

- diaper free
- shoes/pants/coats independently
- using words to communicate
- building relationships, social skills and larger group (community) skills.

The Zorritos class has a maximum of 8 children with 1 teacher. As such it is imperative that children be developmentally ready for the higher child/teacher ratios. All children develop at a different pace and this pace must be honored.

A day in the Zorritos class: A classroom rhythm is established each year and often varies depending on the children and their developmental needs and personalities. There are a variety of activities offered each day which may include one or more of the following: fine, gross and motor sensory exploration, books and early literacy pieces, music, finger plays and storytelling, investigation and experimentation based on children's interests, neighborhood walks and exploration.

### *Mapaches – Preschool Class*

**The Mapaches Class** is for children ages 3-4 in September who have **mastered most of the preschool readiness skills**:

- diaper free
- shoes/pants/coats independently
- using words to communicate
- building relationships, social skills and larger group (community) skills.

### **A Day in the Mapaches Classroom**

This classroom is full of 20 lively, inquisitive and energetic 3 to 4 year olds. There is a balance between exploratory play based activities and structure and routine for these preschool students. Signals and audible cues are used throughout the day to help the children transition and to promote their independence and self-sufficiency as they learn to navigate the school days. The teachers strive to provide consistency while also emphasizing the importance of flexibility when it comes to daily routines. There are a variety of activities offered each day which may include one or more of the following: sensory exploration, art projects and material exploration in the studio, cooking/baking opportunities, science experiments, field trips, nature walks, early literacy development, math concepts, yoga, music and manipulative, building and collaborative games. Below is a glimpse at the daily schedule.

## **Daily Routines**

Morning exploration/provocation  
Community circle time  
Morning snack (optional)  
Project and inside exploration  
Outside exploration  
Lunch  
A consistent daily nap/quiet time  
Afternoon snack (optional)  
Inside exploration/classroom studio time  
Afternoon outside exploration

## **Daily Routines:**

A classroom rhythm is established each year and often varies depending on the children and their developmental needs and personalities. The following are aspects of the classroom that children and parents can expect:

Math, science and the arts opportunities  
Social and collaborative experiences  
A consistent rest/rejuvenation time  
Music and story-telling is offered  
Outside activity and Gross Motor Development  
Books and literacy experiences  
Sensory motor activities  
Material exploration  
Fine and gross motor activities (indoor)

## **Our Approach to Learning and Educational Standards**

**Curriculum.** Constructivism is at the heart of The Reggio Emilia approach, and as a Reggio Inspired School constructivism is evident throughout the work we do with the children. Pulling from the Education for Life philosophies we have the framework to see children as unique and individual learners, having their own set of tools for learning about themselves and the world around them. This allows us to teach the whole child.

The *four tools of maturity* offer a lens into these different modalities. We connect each child's learning styles within the Developmental Domains (nationally defined) listed below:

### ***Developmental Domains for Curriculum/Project Planning (Tools of Maturity)***

- Social-emotional (emotional)
- Language/literacy/Math (intellect)

- Physical development – fine/gross motor (physical)
- Problem solving (will)

Children all have different ways of learning. The four tools of maturity are found within us all in varied degrees and amounts. By working to incorporate all four tools of maturity into the students project work, teachers are able to reach more students. Finding ways to incorporate all four tools of maturity in the work we do with the children is the major way for evaluating children's development, planning and tracking projects, as well as tracking progress and assessment.

**The Project Approach.** The project approach is how we work to ensure that children feel inspired by the work they do. Children's primary task at this age is to learn through play. Children have a strong disposition to explore and discover. The Project Approach builds on natural curiosity, enabling children to interact, question, build-connections, communicate, problem-solve and reflect (inquiry process). Teachers work to connect classroom experiences to questions prompted by the children's natural curiosity. Using photos and written documentation, teachers will make the learning visible, allowing parents to connect what children are learning at school to experiences they have at home. The stronger the home school connection, the stronger the classroom community.

**Educational Standards:** As many of us are parents ourselves, we understand a parents strong desire to want the best educational experience possible for their child(ren). Using the project approach, teachers track the state standards for each developmental stage. During spring parent teacher conferences, and as needed, teachers use project documentation to illustrate the vast learning evident in each project as it relates to the state standards. Please be aware that we do NOT tailor our curriculum to state standards; yet work within this framework to track each child's learning. We ultimately believe that honoring each child's natural curiosity and love of learning is how we best prepare your child for later more advanced educational experiences.

## **ENROLLMENT & ATTENDANCE**

### **Enrollment**

Each of our classrooms has a set maximum enrollment determined by the licensing guidelines for the particular age group and room size. Escuela Viva is a year round program, with a September start for most children new to our program. Occasional mid-year openings are filled as they become available. *Changes in attendance during the academic year can only be made on a space available basis.*

### **Tuition**

Our tuition rates are based upon the staffing required to provide the highest quality of care throughout your child's tenure at Escuela Viva. Development is a very dynamic process. A child comes into the world fully equipped to learn all that they will learn in their lifetime. Providing a loving and nurturing environment that takes into account all of their needs is also a dynamic process. Caregivers must be attuned to the ever-changing needs of the children in their care. The

quality of the care your child will receive is dependent upon this! Our classrooms have lower ratios of teachers to students and that is reflected in the tuition rates.

As an early childhood program providing the highest quality care designed to support your child's development, staff requires regular planning time as well as times to plan their own vacations. Our center is closed 3 weeks out of the year, with a handful of teacher planning days (in-service days), 4 days for parent teacher conferences as well as holiday closures. These closures allow teachers the necessary time to plan their own personal vacations and give them sufficient time for preparing and planning while creating the least amount of staffing disruptions.

- All tuition is based on a 49 week school year.
- All tuition is due in equal amounts regardless of your child's attendance.

Tuition is calculated into 12 equal amounts taking into account our closures.

### **Schedules**

Escuela Viva offers the following \*regular schedules:

#### **Half days (8am-12:30pm) or Full days (8am-5pm)**

- Monday-Friday (5 Days)
- Monday/Wednesday/ Friday (3 Days)
- Tuesday/Thursday (2 Days)

### **Additional Policies Regarding Enrollment**

- Children enrolled for two or three days per week may add extra days on an occasional basis if space is available due to anticipated low attendance in the classroom. Extra days are billed at our daily rate.
- Siblings of currently enrolled children are given preference for enrollment from our waiting list. Parents should submit an application for sibling enrollment as early as possible. Due to the limited number of spaces in each classroom and for each attendance schedule, we cannot guarantee enrollment for siblings.
- Each winter (January-February) families are given the opportunity to request their attendance schedule for the following academic year (beginning in September). To ensure your child's schedule for the next academic year your child must be continuously enrolled through the summer. Exceptions are made only if there are other students that can fill your child's summer vacancy.
- Please understand that once you have accepted enrollment for your child at Escuela Viva you are committing to continuous enrollment unless we are given 2 months notice of



withdrawal. Failure to give 2 months notice will result in a bill for any tuition lost due to early withdrawal.

- Transitions from class to class mid-year are NOT typically made UNLESS there are special circumstances and/or it is deemed “in the best interests of the student”. These determinations are made at the discretion of Escuela Viva staff and the child’s teachers in collaboration with the family regarding their child(ren)s development.

### **Hours**

Our school hours are 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. for half-day children and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for full day children.

Please make sure you bring your child to school with enough time to make a smooth transition into their school day. If you are running late please talk with your child prior to entering the classroom and prepare them that they will need to be respectful of their classmates and they may have a limited amount or no free time before circle time. Also if you are unable to drop your child off by 9 a.m. please inform the teacher in advance or call/email the school to give notice. We ask that you refrain from drop off during circle and resting times (varies from class to class). It is extremely important that we respect our children’s circle time in the morning as it sets the tone for the entire day. With that being said it is important that your child not miss circle regularly as this is important community building time.

**What we will do:** From 8 a.m. until circle time children are provided with an exploration (indoors and/or outdoors) time to make their necessary transition into their school day. We will provide support for the children in this transition, as they need it. Classroom schedules will be posted.

**What we ask of you: The Child Care Division requires that you sign your child in and out each day that they attend Escuela Viva.** Upon arrival and departure you must sign the date and time you and your child arrives at and departs from school.

When someone other than the custodial parent(s) will be picking up your child, we must have written notification of the exact dates, times and name of the person scheduled to pick up your child. Only people authorized in your child’s file will be allowed to pick up your child. Valid picture identification is required for all persons picking up your child. This rule is strictly enforced to ensure your child’s safety.

Please make sure that you pick your child up on time at their designated pick up time. ***Here is a list of designated pick up times.***

All Classes: Half Day 12:30 p.m.

All Classes: Full Day by 5 p.m.\*

If you need to pick your child up early please do so by 1 p.m. or after 3 p.m. Please respect the children's rest time and do not come into the classroom between 1 and 3 p.m. if at all possible, or call or email in advance to give notice.

### **Vacations & Absences**

We believe that travel and family time is important for children. However, it is also important for children to have the consistency of being part of the every day routine. This provides continuity not only for your child but also for the other children who experience the loss of your child's energy when s/he is absent. Extensive absences make it difficult to maintain a flow that deepens understanding of the topics/themes of interest, in a natural progression. If at all possible, we request that parents schedule vacations during school breaks, providing the child with both enriching experiences of travel and the consistency of education.

If your child will not be at school we ask that you notify school staff as soon as possible so that we do not become concerned about your child (503-282-2091), or email. To ensure that we always have the appropriate number of staff to children we must require that all days be paid for regardless of attendance. Please refer to the school calendar for closures.

### **Holidays & Closures**

We offer school every weekday of the year except for during the 3 weeks of school vacation, 3 staff training days a year, Fall and Spring Parent Teacher Conferences, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. Please see the school calendar on our website for specific dates. **Your family is not charged during these scheduled closures. It has been factored into your monthly tuition.** We are open on all other holidays for those parents who need child care. These are not "classroom" days so your child will not be missing out on vital class work if you choose to keep them out of school for family time, etc. Prior to these holidays we will ask you whether you will be bringing your child on these to ensure appropriate staffing. In the event that all parents are keeping their children at home on certain holidays we will close the school for those days.

### **In-Service**

We would like to thank families for helping us maintain a high quality program for young children by supporting our need for in-service time. Research shows that high quality programs for children include a strong in-service component. In recognition of the importance of in-service for teachers and administrators, the state childcare licensing regulations and the required frequent in-service training we have designated three school days out of the year as in-service days for our teachers. Please refer to the school calendar for these dates, as the school will be closed. Activities that teachers and administrators engage in during in-service include: attending classes or workshops, professional development, readying the classroom for new children or programs, organizing classroom environments and materials, developing teaching and classroom goals and curriculum, preparing children's individual portfolios and preparing for parent conferences, and documenting children's learning. Please check the calendar on our website for a listing of our in-service days and closures.

## **Withdrawal**

We know that situations occur where you might need to withdraw your child from our school. It is required that you notify us **2 months** prior to the last day of attendance. This will allow us to prepare the students transitions and future scheduling. Notification must be made in writing so as not to have any form of miscommunication. Failure to give appropriate notice may result in additional fees. **You will be charged the amount of tuition lost due to your failure to give the required notice, which includes forfeiting your full deposit**

## **PAYMENT POLICIES**

### **Tuition**

Monthly tuition is due by the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month. If a situation arises that you need special arrangements, please talk to the director or admin immediately. You may pay your tuition via check, cash, money order or on-line via the Procure portal.. Please make checks and money orders out to Escuela Viva.

### **Fees**

***Late payment fee:*** \$5.00 per day for payments received on or after the 6<sup>th</sup> of each month.

***Return check fee:*** \$25.00 If your payment is returned we will ask that you continue to pay in cash, credit card or by money order.

***Early Drop Off/Late Pick Up (prearranged):*** \$7.00 per ½ hour (before 8 a.m/after 5 p.m.) *when we have adequate staffing to support this. Check in with the director or admin regarding availability.*

***Late Pick Up Fee:*** \$1.00 per minute (after 5)

***Failure to give 2 months notice fee:*** Full payment of tuition lost, which includes forfeiting your full deposit.

***Annual Supplies Fee:*** Every September we ask families to provide a \$50 supplies fee.

## FACILITIES

### **Gaining access to building.**

**Community vigilance.** As is always true no matter which neighborhood you are in, it is always important to notify staff of unusual occurrences in our area. If there is something happening that you are uncertain about please report to a staff member so that we can assess the need for further action.

**Guests at EV.** When someone is visiting EV for the first time, please let family and friends know a bit about what to expect. Ensure all individuals who will be picking up your child are on the Authorization to Pick Up Form. We will ask for identification from individuals who are requesting to pick up your child. Even if they have been asked before, they may be asked multiple times, as no staff is allowed to let a child leave the premises unless they have met them personally in the past. If you are staying for more than just a drop off please note the following protocol.

**The Child Care Division requires you sign in when you are planning on staying to volunteer or visit in the classroom.** You and your families or friends can find this sheet in the main office.

Additionally, as the safety of all the children is at the top of our priority, we will not let an unfamiliar person enter our building without first asking who they are and their connection to our school. Sometimes this can make people feel unwelcome; yet it is a measure we take to ensure we know who is entering our building. If someone is trying to gain access to the building and you do not know them personally and they do not have an access code, please introduce yourself and ask how you may help them find their way into the building. Please ensure they make their way to a staff person even if it feels awkward at first.

**Parking.** Parking is limited in and around the building. Please be courteous neighbors and do not block driveways.

**Animals.** At Escuela Viva we value all living beings. We spend a great deal of time studying animals in nature, especially bugs and insects. Although a potential incident on school property is unlikely, our school policy regarding dogs is that "No dog, excluding service animals, will be allowed in the school or on school property." Sometimes when dogs are together in groups they become insecure or territorial, which could lead to doggie disagreements. This is not only scary for small children it can be dangerous. There are types of situations that might be proven acceptable (tying your dog to the fence during drop off/pick up), but please do not bring dogs inside the school or onto the playground unless there is a written exception.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

We practice emergency drills on a regular basis. The children practice how to quickly and safely evacuate our school in case of fire or another emergency. Staff also practice drills and scenarios at professional development meetings without children present.

In case of an actual emergency in which we are not able to inhabit the building, we will evacuate the building.

Please ensure that your emergency contact information is up-to-date at all times. Please note that we believe that it is very important that children know that we are physically and mentally present with them at all times, for these reasons we are not always able to answer the school phone.

All of our staff is CPR trained. All parents must complete and sign the emergency release form allowing us to administer emergency medical treatment and/or transport to the nearest hospital.

We recommend that each family create their own emergency plan. Family plans will need to include a plan for which a family member will pick up the child, where the family will meet and a plan for communicating with one another. It is suggested that an out-of-state contact person be designated because following an earthquake the long distance phone lines are usually the first to be back in service. If possible each family member should check-in with the out-of-state person and receive news from the others.

## **HEALTH POLICIES**

As a state-certified child-care program, we are mandated to exclude children who are ill or have symptoms of illness. Our child-care license does not allow us to provide care for children when they are ill. Symptoms or conditions, which may exclude your child from school or for which he/she will be sent home, include but are not limited to:

- \*\*Diarrhea (two incidents in a day at school)
- Vomiting
- Fever greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- Unusual color to the skin or eyes
- Rash
- Severe cough
- Sneezing accompanied by yellow/green mucus (which is a sign of infection)
- Skin infections
- Unusual behavior
- Child is cranky or less active than usual or listless
- Child cries more than usual
- Change in eating or drinking habits
- Sore throat, earache, swollen glands

- Skin or eye lesions that are severe, weeping or pus-filled
- Any of the communicable diseases including but not limited to chicken pox, strep, scabies, measles, etc. Please notify staff if your child has contracted a communicable disease.
- \*Active case of head lice
- Complaints of severe pain

\*In the case of head lice we do not check school wide for head lice. If head lice are apparent parents will be notified and asked to pick up their child and provide treatment. Head lice can become chronic so if you need additional information as to head lice treatment reference the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We also have resources posted on the parent page of our website.

\*\*In the case of diarrhea and vomiting due to the stomach flu (if they develop symptoms at school we will ask that they see a physician to determine if the causes are from the stomach flu), **your child needs to be well for at least 3 days before you send them back to school**. That means that it has been 72 hours since they last vomited or had diarrhea. They may still be contagious though, so keep them home longer if possible in consideration of others. **48 hours** is the absolute minimum amount of time to wait to be sure that your child is healthy. It is common today for parents to send their kids back to school or day care as soon as they are feeling better. This is the main reason the stomach flu (viral gastroenteritis) spreads like wildfire. If you send them back to school only 24 hours after their last episode of vomiting or diarrhea, they will still be contagious and they may not be done vomiting or may still have diarrhea. There is often a delay between the vomiting and diarrhea segments of the stomach flu. (See article by Dr. Annie Pryor for more information: <http://www.stopthestomachflu.com/>) When in doubt, get a doctor's note stating they can return to school.

In order to return to school, children must be fully recovered, without the aid of fever reducers or other medications that temporarily mask symptoms. **Children must be fever free for 24 hour to ensure that they are well enough to return to school** (excluding stomach flu see above). Children must be able to fully participate in a busy school schedule. There will be less illness at the Escuela Viva if ill children are kept at home! If your child is ill and not coming to school, please call the Center by 9:00AM to notify us (503 477 6905). If your child becomes ill at school, we will call you and ask you to take your child home immediately.

It is imperative that an up-to-date list of names and telephone numbers of the responsible adult willing to pick up you child in case you will be away from your regular work place. Please leave alternate phone numbers or locations with the office in the morning.

In the event of an emergency, the child will be given appropriate first aid, and if necessary, transported to a hospital for care. The parent will be located as soon as possible, but if unavailable, one of the emergency contacts will be called to help locate a parent and/or assist with the situation. **It is the parent's responsibility to make sure the emergency card on file for your child is up-to-date and to make sure phone numbers, locations, and emergency information is current and accurate.**

Minor injuries, which occur at the Center, will be recorded in our incident log or “Incident Report Form.” In addition, when appropriate or as time allows, teachers will call parents to discuss minor injuries or speak with parents in person at pick-up. Minor injuries are treated with first aid, as appropriate, including washing and bandaging cuts and scrapes, applying ice packs to bumps or bruises and providing comfort and observing children after accidents to determine their readiness to return to play.

### **Medication Policies**

If your child requires medication during the day, whether it be prescription, over-the-counter, ointment for rashes or sunscreen, a medication authorization must be completed stating the name of the medication, the dosage, time to be given, prescription number if applicable, and written permission to administer the medication. All medications must be labeled with your child’s name and date, and must be in its original container.

Children must be current on all immunizations, as required by the state health division and the Child Care Division. Records of such immunizations must be kept on file.

Please keep your child at home if he or she is taking a medication for the first time. Children may develop allergic reactions to medications, especially antibiotics. At home parents can monitor their child and respond quickly to any adverse reactions that may occur.

### **Hand Washing**

Frequent hand washing is the single best way of preventing disease/illness. Please join us (if you’re not already!) in helping your child develop good hand washing habits. Please help your child wash his/her hands upon arrival to the classroom each morning.

## CLASSROOM INFORMATION AND POLICIES

### **Clothing and Personal Belongings**

Children will be participating in many kinds of activities while at Escuela Viva. This includes gardening, yoga, creative play, bathrooming, etc. We ask that your child be dressed appropriately for free movement, loose fitting clothing that is easy to change is best. Also remember that our preschoolers are working on independence. Dressing your child in clothing that is easy to change when they have had an accident and shoes that they can put on themselves truly makes the children feel more confident and competent.

We also ask that you bring/leave at least one clean outfit for unexpected situations where a change of clothes will be required. Please keep in mind that your child will be allowed to explore with different mediums (paint, clay, dirt, etc) while at school. We will provide large shirts to cover up their clothing but keep in mind that they may soil or stain their clothing even with this extra layer of clothing. Also please make sure your child has appropriate rain gear as is required by the weather. **Please label ALL personal belongings with your child's name. This will reduce the amount of clothing and belongings in the lost and found. Sharpies work great for this OR there are wonderful individualized sticker resources found online.**

**Please help us with maintaining a clean and organized school community by taking extra items home. There is truly only so much space to store extra unnecessary items. Any unlabeled items that are in the lost and found for over a month will be donated.**

**For Children in Diapers:** Please keep in mind that if your child is in diapers and the supply runs out during the school day Escuela Viva does not provide or carry an extra supply.

### **Rules and Discipline**

It is important for children to learn about rules and why they are important. Rules are critical for any learning environment. It is also important that not too many constraints be placed on children as they learn to explore and create!

#### ***Our classroom rules:***

- Be safe. (Ten cuidado)
- Respect others. (Respetar a los demás)
- Respect yourself. (Respetar a mi mismo)
- Have fun. (Diviertanse)

We believe in clear and consistent age appropriate limits to help children become responsible for their actions, to learn how to engage in appropriate problem-solving and to learn the benefits of consistency and structure. Children are encouraged to verbalize how they feel, to come up with solutions, and define appropriate consequences for broken rules.

One of our best tools is redirection. Often children will demonstrate mischievous or other unwanted behaviors when they are bored and/or over stimulated. As we get to know your child we will



become better at understanding their behavioral cues that will help us anticipate their needs. Any challenges that we need more assistance with will be worked out directly with the child and his/her parent(s).

*Our goal is help children understand what they are feeling and how to handle these feelings appropriately. Each of our children is unique, therefore, as teachers, we use many different techniques to accomplish this goal. Often times our children help us find other ways to bring out the best in them.*

We use several techniques in our classroom, they are listed below and we encourage parents to talk to the teachers to discuss any details that may seem unclear. When parents and teachers use similar styles children feel more at ease and the consistency is comforting.

- Water: when children are upset, just as adults, sometimes a little water can make all the difference!
- Taking Breaks: when children are upset, whether it be sad or angry we show the children a quiet place to gather their thoughts, think, and gain composure. We use this in place of the usual “time out”. This teaches children to take time away, to remove themselves from situations that might be escalating and assist them in calming down.
- Limit setting
- Breathing
- Role Playing
- Peace Mat: As developmentally appropriate for the age of the child - first off is to ensure the child is calm and ready to check in (What happened? How did it make you feel? How to resolve it? Showing love?)
- Listening & Learning from the children
- Consistency
- Encouraging them to take breaks and/or space when needed
- Taking responsibility
- Modeling what we expect
- Communication with team members (parents & other teachers)
- Yoga

We take inspiration from two books when working with children and challenging behaviours and encourage families to read them, too. [Taking Charge](#) by JoAnne Nordling and [Teaching with Love and Logic](#) or [Parenting with Love and Logic](#) by Jim Fay and Foster Cline. We do have some copies of both books on hand for check out, please touch base with a teacher and/or administrator if you are wanting to borrow one.

### **Big Body Play**

Our program philosophy and curriculum reflects the need for children to engage in rigorous play that allows them opportunities to learn about their bodies and how to negotiate them in various situations, acquire problem-solving skills, and master social situations involving their peers.

There are many ways to describe this type of play, “rough and tumble”, “big body play”, “boisterous play”, etc. just to name a few. In our program you will see this type of play take on many forms, including but not limited to:

- Jumping
- Climbing
- Sliding
- Dancing
- Wrestling
- Rolling
- Tumbling
- Crawling

In order to properly support this type of play we provide the following to ensure, as much as possible, the safety and well-being of the children and staff:

- Regular training and support during all staffs, group and individual supervision regarding the importance of “big body play” and how to properly support it in and out of the classroom.
- Regularly assess our indoor and outdoor spaces to minimize potential hazards to this type of play.
- Provide all the children the proper environment and supports for this type of play. (Materials and ample space, for example.)
- Create rules that provide the boundaries to safely support this type of play, and when applicable collaborate with the children to create these rules.
- Supervise “big body play” at all times, providing scaffolding, support and encouragement as needed.

### **What your child will learn**

Life is full of potential hazards. We would be doing our children a great disservice if we sheltered them from every bump, bruise, scratch or similar injury. As a parent I have struggled with this personally. I have learned there is a difference between teaching our children to be “mindful” of situations that could result in harm to being overly vigilant and passing on our fears to our children. One day, sooner than any of us want to admit, our children will be off to grade school and ultimately college, spending more and more time with peers, and less and less time under our watchful eye. The hope is that they will have learned a thing or two about caring for themselves, assessing risk, managing their fears, yet moving forward into life confident and self-assured. It is a balance that we all work to create and it is our hope that children’s explorations under the guidance of their parents and educators will allow them to learn many of the skills essential in this equation.

Our classrooms and teaching teams will provide the environment that will support your child as they learn these essential skills. What we cannot assure you is that during this process your child will not be injured. Injury, with proper support and proper first aid, is a regular part of childhood, and even more generally a regular part of life. Through every bump and bruise your child will become more and more confident in their ability to pick themselves up, smooth out their clothes,

and carry on. It is this type of confidence that your child will carry with them throughout their childhood, what an amazing gift!

### **Birthdays and Special Occasions**

We acknowledge that all families have different celebrations and traditions. We want to learn about and respect these traditions and celebratory occasions. Please advise us of any traditions, birthdays, celebrations that are important to your family. These can be put on your enrollment paperwork. We ask that any foods brought to school for any type of celebration be discussed in advance with the teacher and/or director. Please remember that state health policy strictly forbids us from serving any home baked goods. All special treats may be purchased from a store or bakery, or baked here at school. Ingredients may be brought and put together at school. Please speak to staff to ensure that there is the staffing and kitchen space for this at the time of the event. We also ask that you be mindful of high sugar content, food allergies of other students and classroom activities. Please see our policy on food and nutrition for more explicit information (page 38).

### **Assessment**

Parents will receive progress reports on their children in the form of bi-annual parent-teacher conferences. Parent-teacher conferences take place in the fall and the spring. Parent or teacher may add additional meetings if the need arises.

### **Escuela Viva Policy on Biting**

Our program recognizes that biting is unfortunately not unexpected when toddlers are in group care. We are always upset when children are bitten in our program, and we recognize how upsetting biting is for parents. While we feel that biting is never the right thing for toddlers to do, we know that they bite for a variety of reasons. Most of these reasons are not related to behavior problems. Our program does not focus on punishment for biting but on effective techniques that address the specific reason for the biting. When biting occurs, these are our three main responses:

1. Care and help for the child who was bitten (first and foremost)
2. Provide firm guidance to the child who bit on the importance of “no biting” and support so that he/she learns other behavior.
3. Examination of our program and practices to stop the biting (i.e. environment, developmentally appropriate practices, daily schedule, etc).

Our teachers express firm disapproval of biting. They work to keep children safe and to help the child who bit learn different, more appropriate behavior. As a team, teachers and administrators work together to provide a calm and cheerful atmosphere with a mix of stimulating, soothing, age-appropriate activities and multiples of favorite toys. We also work to model acceptable and appropriate behaviors for the children, helping them learn words and signs to express their feelings and give them tools to resolve conflicts with our help. If and when there are episodes of on going biting, we develop a plan of specific strategies, techniques, and timelines to address it. We do not use any response that harms a child or is known to be ineffective.

We give immediate attention and, if necessary, first aid to children who are bitten. We offer to put ice on the bite if the child is willing. If the skin is broken, we clean the wound with soap and water. If children are bitten on the top of their hands and the skin is broken, we recommend they be seen by their health care provider.

When children bite, their parents are informed personally and privately the same day. When children are bitten, their parents are informed personally that same day. If we experience ongoing biting in a toddler room, we share the written plan we have developed with all parents of children in the room.

Biting is always documented on our standard incident report form or within our incident log. If the form is used, it is completed and signed by a teacher and administrator and kept on file as a record. Parents are always notified same day if their child has been bitten.

We keep the name of the child who bit confidential. This is to avoid labeling and to give our teachers the opportunity to use their time and energy to work on stopping the biting.

Once a year, toddler caregivers attend a training session on biting. In addition, we have current resources on biting available for staff and parents. We encourage parents to bring their concerns and frustrations directly to the teachers and/or administrators.

**Toilet Training Policy: Developmentally appropriate practices:** Toilet training is a difficult process, both for adults and the children. It is 100% most effective when all the adults are working together. Research and experience has demonstrated that a toilet training plan that is consistent and persistent with lots of love and patience is the only way to be truly successful. Here is how Escuela Viva will partner with parents:

**1. Determine if the child is ready.** Do they wake up from nap times dry? The only real way to know is to go immediately to the bathroom and allow the child to go. Check their diaper/pull up. If they are regularly soaked they are not ready. Once they are ready, dry 5-7 times a week after naptime; implement a thorough consistent plan that all adults agree upon.

**2. Child does not wear diapers at anytime during the day.** We have found it most successful to not use diapers once it is determined that the child is having success and feeling positive (dry most of the time during the day and fewer than one accident a day). This includes all sleeping times. Going from a diaper to no diaper sends the brain conflicting messages. The child learns much quicker if they are allowed to have a few accidents during the sleeping hours so that the brain can start to send signals during sleeping hours to wake up to use the restroom. If the child is having repeated daily accidents after a week of trying and the child is frustrated, then it may be best to try again later.

**3. The child will need patient reminders during the day.** Make trips to the bathroom at regular times of the day. Before outside, before and after naps/sleeping times, and 15 minute or so after drinking lots of liquid. Make trips to the potty a joyful time. Sing songs, read a book or talk to them about their day while they try and use the restroom. Give them several minutes of sitting on the

toilet before determining if they do or do not have to go. The younger the brain the longer it takes to send the message that it has to go ....so give them time! Once they are really having success give them the option to not go at these regular times. Giving them autonomy over their body gives them a great sense of empowerment.

**4. Check in with yourself.** Are you finding yourself getting weary during this process? Ask someone to take over for a couple days for you. Remaining positive and patient during this process is so critical!

**5. Partnering with parents.** As we have found that success only comes when all the adults work together, if at anytime a parent seems reluctant, and/or not able to follow the Escuela Viva toilet training policy, Escuela Viva staff will work jointly with parents to determine if we will be able to continue our full efforts towards toilet training. Escuela Viva staff will continue to support parents; yet cannot fully support toilet training until parents are working directly with staff and following the toilet training plan.

## **PARENT PARTICIPATION**

Parents are a vital part of the Escuela Viva family. We have a lobby space that we hope parents will use to talk with other parents. Using this time at school will help your child transition into their day at school, mingle with other parents, and talk to the teachers about your child's successes, needs, etc. If you are unable to do this at the beginning of the day you are more than welcome to come early to pick up your child and talk with teachers. Please be mindful of when morning assembly (circle time) begins and when our day ends. Teachers work very hard to be prepared at the start of our day and are ready to get cleaned up and leave at the end of the day. For longer conversations and check-ins, we will work with you to find a time to talk in person, over the phone or via the computer.

Modes of communication teachers use:

Newsletters

Blogs

All school announcements

Classroom documentation

We will be holding parent teacher conferences in the fall (October) and late spring (May) to evaluate your child's progress and set/review goals.

Staff will update the password protected portion of our blog with pictures and news regarding your child's class. Please speak with any team member if you do not already have access to the blog

### **Visiting your Child:**

Families are ALWAYS welcome to visit! With that being said it can be very hard for children to understand when a parent comes to visit and leaves again. NEVER would we say you couldn't visit, yet please keep in mind how hard it can be to say goodbye a second time. We encourage family

members to collaborate with the teachers to plan a visit or to stay in the classroom. Planning ahead allows adults to be intentional, which can be the secret to a successful visit.

### **Collecting and Utilizing Family Input:**

Family input is vital to the success of our program. We will be utilizing three means for collecting and utilizing your input:

- 1 **Informal communication with teachers.** As parents your number one connection at Escuela Viva is with your child's teachers. Please feel free to share any feedback directly with teachers relating to the classroom, your child, etc. When you have specific feedback relevant to program quality it is also especially important to share this with the center's director, as we have always had a fairly "open door policy". Feel free to stop by and connect with her personally. In the event that the director is in a classroom or unavailable feel free to email her at: [director@escuela-viva.com](mailto:director@escuela-viva.com).
- 2 **Family surveys.** Family surveys will be given out during spring Parent Teacher Conferences. We ask that all surveys be filled out and turned in at the time of your child's conference. We will have a manila envelope available for anonymous submission (optional).

Please know that we take all feedback to heart, and as is always true we will look at all factors when deciding if and when changes are in the best interest of the whole school. As is often the case, it is nearly impossible to meet all the individual needs and desires of families; yet, we will work very hard to ensure that families feel valued and respected and that thoughtful consideration is put into every request and suggested.

### **EV Community Volunteer Hours**

We ask that each family complete 5 to 10 volunteer hours (annually) in or out of the classroom as each one's circumstances and schedules allow. You may volunteer in whatever capacity you feel called to do so, whether it is to share a talent, lead an activity, listen to individual children read, document an activity, interaction in the classroom or assist with art, physical education, or cooking. Please ensure that you sign in when in the classroom or at events when volunteering during school hours. (See page 22)

Please see below for a list of possible opportunities to help in a powerful way (we are open to alternative ways to complete volunteer hours as well!):

- Supplying materials for school projects (see your child's class wish list posted in the classroom and on the blog)
- Preparing materials for the teachers
- Gardening and playground development projects
- Driving and assisting on field trips

- Organizing field trips
- Volunteering in the classroom to lead a project, document an activity, etc.
- Connect with teachers and or administrators to think creatively about ways to be involved.
- Attending one of our Saturday work parties
- Join an Escuela Viva parent committee (fundraising, teacher support, community development/strategic planning)

Talk to your child's teacher to schedule a time. Please keep in mind that when you volunteer in the classroom it is not to assist your child only, but to share your time and talents with all of the children. Please make sure you fill out and hand in the volunteer survey annually!

### **Fundraising**

Our commitment to quality education is at times financially challenging. Tuition does not always cover all of what we know is important for our staff, the children and their families and that is continuing education opportunities, the development of the environment, inside and out and anything that we can help grow and support the Escuela Viva community.

Escuela Viva exists through the financial support of tuition and fundraising efforts. We will throughout the year keep you informed of any upcoming opportunities to help in our efforts.

### **These might include:**

- Tee-shirt Sales
- CHINOOK BOOK SALES
- Parent Teacher Celebration/Silent Auctions
- Annual Grand Celebration
- Bake Sales

Thank you for your commitment to success!

## HOME & SCHOOL CONNECTION

In this section you will find some guidelines that we hope will solidify the connection we set for our children between their home and school day. It is not adherence to hard and fast rules, but the inner spirit that matters. We present these guidelines as goals and ideals that as a family should feel in harmony with in order to get the most out of the program that we offer, not as rigid rules. It is the direction in which parents are moving that is most important.

### **Communication**

Open and honest communication is essential to working together as teachers and parents. We welcome your questions, suggestions, and concerns. You can communicate directly with your child's teacher(s). If you have questions regarding tuition, enrollment, or administrative business please contact the director.

### **Inclusion**

The goal of Education for Life is to help children grow toward *maturity*, defined as the ability to relate appropriately to realities other than their own. It is a challenge for all of us, adults as well as children, to transcend our selfish desires and include the realities of others in our behavior. Yet, we see that selfish people are unhappy and unselfish people are content.

While we recognize the need for children to select special companions and associate with like-minded friends, learning to work with all kinds of personalities is important too. If teachers allow cliques, secrets, or teasing, it is hurtful to others in the class. Not only do we value the children's feelings, we also understand that optimal learning cannot take place in an environment that is not nurturing and accepting. The classroom provides countless opportunities to learn how to include everyone, affirm others' strengths, and expand their sympathies.

***What we will do:*** We will help children learn to be inclusive and to accept each other's limitations (including not allowing put-downs or teasing), and we will encourage compassion and kindness through our own actions and our choice of literature and teaching methods. We are very careful about what we say regarding a child or family in front of other children. We will keep confidential comments children make about what happened at home or what a parent has said because we know children can misunderstand or take a comment out of context.

***What we ask of you:*** Parents will strive to talk kindly and compassionately about the limitations of other children and families in front of their own children. Parents will work to understand that when they criticize another parent or teacher in front of their children, it becomes difficult for their child to respect and relate to that adult and creates confusion and divided loyalties. Your children love and trust their teachers and friends. Negative comments can hurt and confuse your child.

We encourage parents to observe the influence of playmates on their own child's energy and as much as possible to select the most uplifting companions. At the same time, parents can be sensitive to the feelings of all children in the class and not host social events where their child invites half or more of the class to a party or outing without inviting everyone.



When children complain about incidents at school, we ask that parents please talk to the teacher and ask about what occurred and the context before drawing conclusions. Many times simple communication can prevent minor or even serious misunderstandings.

### **Food and Nutrition**

At Escuela Viva we serve a vegetarian whole foods based menu. The children are encouraged to try different kinds of foods and are exposed to the various ingredients that go into their food through exploratory experiences, cooking activities, food preparation and gardening.

***Family Style Service*** - With staff at the tables with the children during meal times, children are continually encouraged to try everything and are given information about what ingredients went into making the food. Nutritional information is shared with the children and discussions around food and it's importance for our emotional and physical health is constantly practiced. Teachers work to create opportunities for the children to make these connections for themselves, highlighting times when they have eaten well and are therefore feeling well and other times when they have not eaten and therefore may not.

***Farm to Table*** – One of the main components we work to foster in the Food and Nutrition component of our curriculum is a relationship with our food and where it comes from. The children grow some of their own food, harvest it and are exposed to various kinds of cooking and food exploration activities through gardening. Seasonal and cultural foods are also incorporated in the nutrition curriculum. Activities related to foods of the different seasons and the diverse cultures of the class community are practiced in the classrooms each year based on the families' traditions, teachers' magnetism and the seasonal foods available. Here are a few examples of traditions that classrooms have practiced in the past.

### **Nutrition**

Children, as well as adults, are better equipped for their day with proper nutrition. The body as a temple requires love, sunlight, physical activity, stillness, and nutrition. Because some of our families practice non-violence in all of its forms they are vegetarian. Other families have chemical sensitivities and eat only organic and chemical free foods. Other children have food sensitivities and are unable to eat certain foods. We require that anything brought for the whole class be vegetarian and organic if possible so that all may enjoy and inclusion is honored. We can offer suggestions on delicious treats that fit these requirements for special events, such as birthdays, when you wish to bring a treat for the whole class. We are committed to educating children on the benefits of healthy lifestyle choices. To abide by state guidelines all food provided must be store bought or prepared at school.

***What we will do:*** When we bake or cook we will make low-sugar treats only occasionally and will avoid unnecessary food additives. We will provide a morning snack, lunch, and afternoon snack for the children. We will provide foods that are mostly organic, and always wholesome and nutritious. We will not provide foods that have hydrogenated oils or high fructose corn syrup. We will give the children opportunities to drink water throughout the day. If children have allergies, we will do

our best to provide alternatives (with the parents' help). We will encourage children to make healthy food choices and to connect their energy levels and with their food choices.

***What we ask of you:*** Please be sure your child has a washable water bottle at school labeled with their name. Please ensure that you are able to thoroughly wash the water bottle as some have very narrow necks making cleaning difficult. We also ask that you take this water container home and wash it weekly. Please make sure your child has breakfast in the morning before school; as morning snack will not be served until 10 a.m. If your child brings breakfast in the morning we ask that they be finished eating by 9am so as not to interfere with the morning routine. This may vary from classroom to classroom, please check in with the teachers.

Snacks from home: All snacks from home must be labeled with name and date and taken home on a daily basis. We also ask that they follow the below guidelines:

### **Food**

Food is a critical part of your child's experience at school. Children are encouraged to try all foods as they learn to develop a palate for various tastes. We also know how important proper nutrition is for your child's educational experiences. As such, as your child is getting acclimated to the foods offered at Escuela Viva, we ask that you consider packing a small snack to supplement should you feel your child will need the additional nutritional support. Additionally, we encourage children to "listen to their bodies" and eat when they are hungry. We offer snacks and lunch at a particular time; yet children are always encouraged to seek support when they feel hunger. As we learn to trust children, while offering only healthy food options, children can and do make very healthy choices for their bodies.

### **Guidelines for Foods to Be Brought:**

- Ensure that the snack bag is labeled with your child's name and date (sharpies work best)
- Ensure that the snack bag is insulated and properly cooled if packing perishable foods
- Please be conscientious of packaged foods as packaged foods have many additives, sugars and preservatives. Additionally, packing adds to waste and we promote sustainability whenever possible.
- Please avoid high sugar snacks. Such snacks will be saved by a teacher until pick-up time
- No candy or gum
- No peanuts or tree nuts.

Foods that don't meet the above criteria may be sent home. Please check in with a teacher if you have any questions.

### **Consumerism**

Simple living and high thinking is one of our ideals. We would rather our students be able to find contentment playing with a few creative and educational toys than to own all the latest toys. You

may have observed that children who have the latest popular toy are usually excited for a short time when acquiring the toy but are soon imploring they have the next product advertised to them.

Many recesses have found the Escuela Viva children playing with re-used buckets, old tire, sticks, and good old-fashioned dirt to cook complete meals. Children who are usually focused on acquiring the next possession simply don't exhibit as much creativity and imagination as children who own less but have plenty of interaction with adults and basic materials with which to create.

***What we will do:*** We will provide a variety of materials, including uplifting books and music. We will take the children on nature walks where we look for beautiful treasures in nature to see and enjoy. Creative play and acting out stories will be encouraged. We will also work with our school community to keep media related play toys out of our classroom environments.

***What we ask of you:*** We encourage families to buy quality games and toys, books and story tapes, to spend time using them with their children and to resist giving their children whatever product is currently being marketed to children. We can provide parents with catalogs of high quality materials for children upon request.

For sharing at school, we appreciate parents encouraging their children to bring treasures from nature, special books, or meaningful mementos rather than a purchased toy. It is helpful when parents help their children connect the objects they bring into school with what is occurring in the classroom community. If we are talking about fall leaves and children want to bring in leaves from their yard, etc. that is completely appropriate. **We request that no media tie-in toys be brought to school (homemade items are fine).** Children may bring stuffed animals or a special cuddle item for use at naptime only. *\*Items from home practices may vary from classroom to classroom. Please check in with classroom teachers regarding such.*

### **Media**

Children who watch television and videos actually differ from other children in the physiology of their brain development. In recent years brain research has shown that children up to age nine need primarily three-dimensional interactions with the world in order to have normal brain development. Children who stare at a two-dimensional TV screen too much do not develop adequate dendrites for fovea vision, necessary for sharp central vision. The same would be true for computer screens (or even reading too much, although few kids start to read for hours at a time earlier than age ten). Remember that experts all agree that children 2 and under are at a very critical stage for brain development. The brain is still growing in size and creating neural pathways. Babies need lots of human one on one interaction for these critical parts of the brain to develop properly. Exposure to television and other screen related media takes away from this precious time.

On a more subjective level, we as teachers notice that children who are exposed to a lot of media 1) are often restless and unable to focus as easily as other children; 2) have a habit of being passive instead of using their will and creativity; 3) have a more difficult time than other children using their own imaginations in play, in story-writing, and art; and 4) display sullen behavior, negative attitudes, depression, and hyperactivity more often than their peers that are not as exposed.

Children who watch movies and videos intended for adults often use language and behaviors that are sarcastic, disrespectful, unrealistic or violent. Their writing and art often contains violent, bloody imagery of which is contagious in a classroom environment.

Further, as children get older, according to the Education for Life philosophy, children ages six to twelve are in the *feeling* years. During these years children have the opportunity to develop their feeling natures. During this period, they are naturally very open and receptive. When children are exposed to media with anger and hate, they tend to harden themselves somewhat to cope with the intensity of the energy. This makes them less receptive to uplifting influences.

Using computers is a mental activity, which we believe should not be the main focus for the *feeling* years. Children six through eleven years old should be given lots of chances to interact with nature, pets, music, stories, and other people—activities that develop the feeling nature.

At the same time, we develop all four Tools of Maturity (body, feeling, will, and intellect) at all ages, and we don't wait to teach children to read and write until age twelve. We are talking about a matter of emphasis, not a rigid black and white rule.

***What we will do:*** We provide an uplifting, positive, safe environment. We will not use computers, games or videos as babysitters to occupy children so that we can get a break. When we occasionally watch a video, it will be instructional in nature and will supplement the curriculum or on the rare occasion when we have a video as a treat (at parents night out or as a celebration) it will be an uplifting story that we have previewed for developmentally appropriate content. Computers will be used in the classroom as an instructional tool only and will be used solely with adult supervision. An alternate activity such as reading books or drawing will be available during all screen events (i.e. instructional video, occasional movie, slide show, video documentation of class or peers, etc.). All screen related activities will be connected to project work or other classroom community activities (i.e. marble jar celebration/special occasion). These events will last no longer than ½ hour and will be free of advertisements. Adults in the center will not use electronic media for personal use during operational hours or when supervising children. The above viewing practices will be used for children 2 years and older only. If and when sharing documentation with children under 2, we will use a projector or printed format.

***What we ask of you:*** **Please limit children's exposure to media (TV, computers, movies) to no more than 5 hours a week.** On school nights the focus of playing games, homework, sports, reading together, relaxing to music or story tapes, or just daydreaming rather than on viewing videos or television programming helps to foster deeper family connections at home and at school. At the very least, we ask that the movie rating system be adhered to in choosing videos and movies for children, that is, no R or PG-13 videos for children in the first twelve years. Parents who decide to allow their children to play video games before the age of 12 should play them with their child so they know exactly what influences their children are exposed to. Parents could ask themselves whether they would want their children to emulate the behaviors being displayed. Parents will be especially cautious to limit and monitor media when children's school friends visit.

## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

- *Education for Life*, J. Donald Walters
- *Scary News: 12 Ways to Raise Joyful Children When the Headlines are Full of Fear*, Lorna Ann Knox
- *Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting*, Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn
- *Perfect Health for Kids*, Dr. John Douillard
- *The Nurture Assumption*, Judith Harris
- *Busy but Balanced*, Mimi Doe
- *Little Sugar Addicts: End the Mood Swings, Meltdowns, Tantrums, and Low Self-Esteem in Your Child Today*, Kathleen DesMaisons
- *For Goodness' Sake: Supporting Children & Teens in Discovering Life's Highest Values*, Michael Nitai Deranja
- *Easy to Love; Difficult to Discipline: 7 Basic Skills for Turning Conflict into Cooperation*, Becky Bailey
- *Calm and Compassionate Children*, Susan McDermond
- *The Explosive Child: A new approach for understanding and parenting easily frustrated, chronically inflexible children*, by Dr. Ross W. Greene
- *I Love You Rituals* by Becky Baily