



## CARE & NATURAL LEARNING

### Guidance for Families Home with Young Children

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**Play:** A play based curriculum is not found in lesson plans or activity packs – it is alive and evolving and co-created with children in our care. A play-based-child-centered curriculum emerges from relationships, from socialization, and most importantly, from play themes. Children are master learners – driven by their sense of wonder and curiosity. Their natural inclination to pretend is what drives their engagement. Their ability to use their imagination all day reveals the way they make sense of the world as well as their unique intelligence and deep symbolic thinking.

**Environments:** We’ve learned from the world renowned early childhood leaders in Reggio Emilia, Italy, to think of the environment as “the third teacher.” The environment is the palate and children add the color, sound, movement and life. We look for ways to bring the outside inside and the inside outside.

**Materials:** We offer children real life experiences in art, woodworking, cooking, gardening and all these experiences are woven into a day of play where children interact with one another - as well as with blocks, paint, clay, cloth, and all sorts of natural materials. We look for open ended props like wooden blocks and that offer multiple tiers of learning. For example when a child plays with blocks she has an experience with shape, balance, symmetry and she also directs her learning by building enclosures and towers that become buildings or worlds. There is no right or wrong way and there is always originality, challenge and surprise.

**Role of the Adult:** Adults are collaborators in the sense that they observe and offer children provocations through interesting materials and thoughtful responses. The pedagogy of listening offers adults an opportunity to step back and catch children’s stories and play themes as a way to understand their interests, knowledge and questions. Adults use language intentionally to help children reflect upon their play and inventions. One way to extend a child’s engagement is to enter a state of true curiosity by noticing and commenting upon what you see, “I see...” “I wonder...” “I notice....” “Can you tell me how....”

Here's a [booklet of recipes, ideas and photos](#) to inspire PLAY based learning at home. Here's a blog by Teacher Tom about why [preschool teachers don't make "lesson plans"](#).

