



2017-18

Family Handbook

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 The IDEA School

 "The IDEA School Parents Forum"

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MISSION

At IDEA School, students are engaged in their learning and own it.

VISION

All children are intrinsically motivated learners and constructors of knowledge. All children can develop a deep sense of empathy and compassion for others. The IDEA School promotes these qualities and helps our students build upon them, for the benefit of themselves, their families, our community, and the world.

The IDEA School provides a Reggio Emilia inspired, inquiry-based educational experience for children that is engaging and collaborative. We nurture students' ability to take on challenging problems and do meaningful work, and help them become compassionate, intelligent learners.

2017-18 STAFF

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Our Expectations of Students, Parents, and Collaborators

*“Freedom is choosing your responsibility.
It’s not having no responsibilities; it’s choosing the one you want.”*
-Toni Morrison

We expect students:

- To take an active role in their own growth and learning
- To encourage others to grow and learn, too
- To respect and contribute to the IDEA School community
- To be responsible for their own behavior and aware of how their behavior impacts others
- To be kind and respect themselves, others, and the environment around them
- To make goals, assess their goals, and work hard to achieve them
- To develop their strengths and address their areas for growth
- To make growth and learning priorities in their lives
- To challenge themselves

We expect parents:

- To encourage students to set learning goals, develop personal strengths, and address areas for growth
- To support students in learning in their own ways and at their own pace
- To reinforce the school-wide expectations to be kind, be safe, and be respectful
- To develop a thorough understanding of the educational philosophy of the school
- To attend student-parent-collaborator conferences twice a year and informal discussions throughout the year; to work collaboratively with the school on goals outlined in these discussions
- To set boundaries around things that may be detrimental to their student’s learning, including screen time and bed times
- To provide healthy food for their student every day
- To pay tuition and fees in a timely manner and contribute time during school Work Days and other opportunities to support the school
- To reach out to staff if they have any questions or concerns, and work with staff to address them

We expect collaborators:

- To provide a learning environment that is safe, comfortable, creative, engaging, and conducive to learning
- To provide challenging learning activities and leadership for students
- To be involved as learners and to model the enthusiasm, curiosity, and hard work that we expect from students
- To support students in learning in their own ways and at their own pace
- To provide a democratic atmosphere that respects the dignity of each person; to provide a climate of responsibility, discipline and care
- To meet with their family group students on a regular basis and communicate student progress in writing to parent(s)
- To be aware of the academic and social growth of each student, and to record and communicate this growth to the student and parent(s)

Our Convictions about Learning

Aligned with our vision, we adhere to the following seven fundamental convictions about learning. These beliefs inspire and inform all school activities and we encourage parents to find creative ways to reinforce them at home.

Learning is an active process. Learning holds meaning when we immerse ourselves in the process and become fully engaged. Children learn through playful, creative, and constructive activities.

Learning is a social process of collaborating with others. We learn through talk. Different kinds of talk occur in different types of groupings: large group, small group and pairs. Experiences in all of these support our thinking. When we talk with others, we move from conversation to dialogue that deepens our understanding.

Learning is reflective. We need to step back and reflect on our thinking in multiple ways such as talking, writing, sketching and self-evaluation. Each way of reflecting can offer us new insights.

Choice is vital to learning. Choice allows us to connect our learning experiences and take ownership in our learning process. We need choices in what we learn and how we interpret what is learned so that our voices are heard.

Learning occurs when we make connections to our own experiences. We approach each new learning experience by searching out and finding connections to what we already know and understand. Each of us comes to any new event with a unique set of experiences and this background influences what we connect to and what we gain moving forward. At IDEA School, provocations are relevant and meaningful to kids; they are inspired by their interests and passions.

Learning is a process of inquiry. As learners we need to search out the questions that matter in our lives, develop strategies for exploring those questions and share our new understandings with others. We model question asking and knowledge seeking.

Learning occurs in a multicultural world with many ways of knowing. Our differences bring multiple perspectives to our learning and expand our understanding of the culturally diverse world in which we live. Our lives and learning are set in a multicultural context. Perspective taking is a vital part of empathy and compassion.

A Brief History of the Progressive Education Movement

The idea that knowledge is an *experience* rather than a bucket of facts emerged at the turn of the 20th century from a number of international education philosophers - most notably American John Dewey, Italians Maria Montessori and Loris Malaguzzi, and Brazilian Paulo Freire - challenging the popular Prussian System's norms of the time.

In his seminal book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire describes how the mission of education is not to produce children who are “banks” in which knowledge is deposited and withdrawn. Instead, it is a practice of *freedom* in which children learn to meaningfully engage the world in ways that allow them to participate in the transformation of reality.

Malaguzzi's Reggio Emilia philosophy echoes and deepens Freire's sentiment. Reggio approaches believe in the inherent abilities and rights of children, particularly with regard to their competence and ability to actively construct relations, knowledge, feelings, and identity - as described in Malguzzi's poem (see next page): the ability of people to speak and meaningfully perform 100 languages. Fluency in these languages, these *ways of knowing*, is critical if we want to create an enlightened, compassionate, and creative society of adults.

Consistent with the Reggio philosophy, we believe fluency in a variety of intellectual and social-emotional “languages” offers the opportunity for students to use knowledge in creative ways to address complex problems and serve complex relationships. We believe this kind of fluency is a far better indicator of a meaningful education than the regurgitation of facts. Rather we hope to nurture a truly *whole child* who has all the potential to become a *whole adult* willing and able to tackle the complex problems of the 21st century.

The Reggio Emilia Philosophy at IDEA School

*“We EXPLORE ourselves and the world. We BUILD fluency.
We LEARN to solve problems.”*

The Languages of Learning: Engaging Content

At IDEA School, and according to the Reggio Emilia Philosophy, knowledge is not managed as a collection of facts or rules, but as **“languages” - ways of thinking, discovering, learning and communicating, ways of seeing and of being, and ways to express ideas.** Our work as a school is to provide students with an immersive experience in a variety of content areas and disciplines in ways that foster the development of these multiple languages. We use these languages for thinking, revising, constructing, negotiating, developing, and symbolically expressing what’s meaningful to students in contexts that help them solve practical problems, understand themselves, and understand others.

No way. The hundred is there

The child
is made of one hundred.
The child has
a hundred languages
a hundred hands
a hundred thoughts
a hundred ways of thinking
of playing, of speaking.
A hundred always a hundred
ways of listening
of marveling of loving
a hundred joys
for singing and understanding
a hundred worlds
to discover
a hundred worlds
to invent
a hundred worlds
to dream.
The child has
a hundred languages
(and a hundred hundred hundred more)
but they steal ninety-nine.

The school and the culture
separate the head from the body.
They tell the child:
to think without hands
to do without head
to listen and not to speak
to understand without joy
to love and to marvel
only at Easter and at Christmas.
They tell the child:
to discover the world already there
and of the hundred
they steal ninety-nine.
They tell the child:
that work and play
reality and fantasy
science and imagination
sky and earth
reason and dream
are things
that do not belong together.
And thus they tell the child
that the hundred is not there.
The child says:
No way. The hundred is there.

*Loris Malaguzzi
translated by Lella Gandini*

Provocations that support fluency

The Reggio approach not only encourages open-ended play, but requires that students become adept at using many different languages. Students are expected to be competent at expressing stories, ideas, thoughts and other information in a variety of creative and constructive ways. These experiences with materials, techniques, and constructs are presented by collaborators and called **provocations**. Provocations are meant to engage and inspire students to:

- explore and discuss aspects of content areas
- ask meaningful questions and articulate opinions
- deeply examine a topic using many different lenses
- practice a new tool or techniques
- develop creative and constructive ways to articulate knowledge

All students at the IDEA participate in provocations throughout the day. Most provocations build on one another to make a workshop and can often result in a product or **project** - an example of the student's expression in response to a provocation. Projects can range widely from a drawing, piece of writing or construction to an elaborate piece of performance art. Projects are documented as often as possible to be reviewed during student-parent-teacher conferences.

On a daily basis at IDEA, we offer collaborator-guided and self-guided provocations that encourage fluency in **the following Reggio Emilia languages**. Please note that we not only encourage deep exploration and the development of fluency within workshops, but strongly encourage students to apply fluency across workshops and in their independent work. The more cross-discipline experiences students discover, the deeper their fluency becomes:

- **Reading.** Students are encouraged during a reading period at the end of each day to listen attentively to collaborators reading to them as well as to read independently to themselves. Literacy provocations are also offered during Humanities workshops and in activities such as Book Club, etc., as well as during many of our Early Childhood Room explorations. See the grade level sections (beginning on page 12) for more information on age-specific standards.
- **Writing.** Students are encouraged to develop their writing and written expression skills throughout the day. Activities range from writing letters to creating lists, to writing technical instructions or composing stories. Literacy provocations offered during Humanities workshops include practice in supporting languages such as grammar, spelling, and structure. Early Childhood provocations include Writer's/Story Workshop.
- **Speaking.** Students are encouraged to develop their oral communication skills throughout the day and in all contexts. Activities range from developing interpersonal speaking skills in teams, giving presentations to the class, asking/answering questions during workshops or in provocations, problem solving together, etc.

- **Science.** Students are encouraged to develop fluency in scientific inquiry during the science, math, design & engineering, and technology workshops. Project-based activities often reinforce abstract concepts/ideas that not only bring science to life, but illustrate the multidisciplinary nature of knowledge. For instance, when the general science theme is movement and energy students may perform activities across workshops that illustrate these concepts, including designing paper airplanes, building robots that wander through a maze, baking bread, building spring-driven cars, or designing a play space in the wash.
- **Design & Engineering.** Students are encouraged to develop fluency in innovation and practical problem solving during design & engineering workshop. Project-based activities that encourage manipulating various materials to address a question or solve a problem may include building robots, learning to program, carpentry techniques, computer-assisted design, etc.
- **Math.** Students are required to participate in periodic small group (2-3 students) math mini-workshops each week called “Flash Math”. Activities primarily include games and logic puzzles that offer practice in basic math standards appropriate for the developmental level of the participants. The goal of the math program is to help children become comfortable playing with and manipulating numbers through no-stress practice that feels like play or discovery. We encourage in-depth understanding over repetition. To encourage the most successful transition to high school math, we encourage memorization of basic math facts and using proper mathematical vocabulary from the early Primary years forward. Making math “real,” practical, and fun is the best foundation you can give a child to promote sound logic, reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- **Social Studies & History.** Students are encouraged to develop their social studies and history skills in the Humanities workshops. Activities may include project-based experiences or reading-based discussions on major events in history, national and global citizenship, techniques for negotiation and conflict resolution, etc.
- **Visual Arts.** Students are encouraged to develop their visual art skills in the art workshops. Activities include working with a wide variety of materials and techniques including painting, collage, ceramics, paper crafts, metal art, etc.
- **Performing Arts & Music.** Students are encouraged to develop their performing arts skills in the Art and Humanities workshops as well as extracurriculars such as the school band. Activities include writing and performing theatrical productions, writing/performing songs, and more.
- **Technology.** Students are encouraged to creatively develop their technology skills using constructive digital design, problem solving, and presentation tools. Activities include robotics, Arduino electronic design, and principles of programming.

- **Play.** Students are encouraged to develop their play skills all day long. Play is a fundamental core competency required to foster innovation, creativity, and an intrinsic love for learning. When students play, they are developing a rich and positive sensitivity for meaning, risk, and rigor, as well as their collaboration and conflict-resolution skills.

Our objective is to encourage children’s curiosity and motivation, while also offering opportunities to develop fluency through hands-on experiences inside and outside the school space.

Habits of Mind: Engaging Self and Others

In addition to exposing children to a variety of provocations in each language, we also work with them to develop an awareness of self and others. **We evaluate students on these habits of mind that we know will be vital to their health and well-being throughout their lives.** In fact, you will notice on the bi-annual written assessments that the development of these habits of mind are central to what we value and central to our work with your children.

We look for these traits and offer opportunities to practice them on a daily basis. These habits of mind include:

- Empathy
- Creativity and Innovation
- Curiosity
- Confidence
- Responsibility
- Self-Management
- Critical Thinking
- Collaboration
- Perseverance
- Listening and Understanding

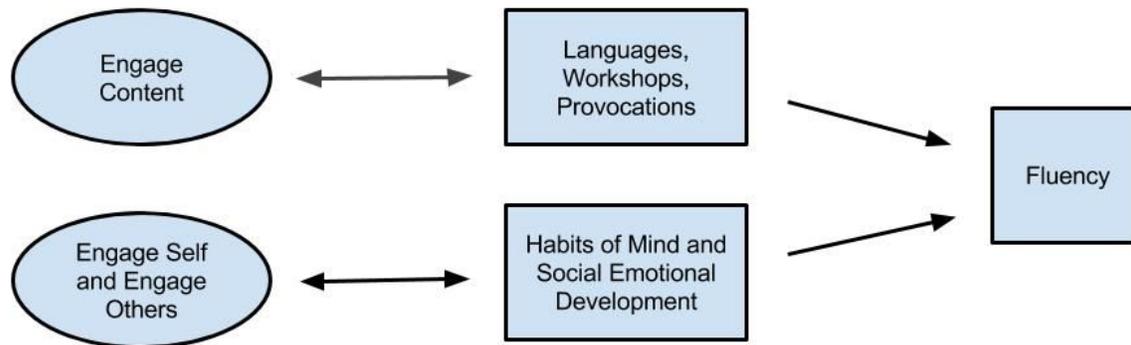
Each day, collaborators record our observations of students practicing these habits of mind. These notes are collated, analyzed, and presented to parents in the student narrative assessment twice a year.

Building Fluency: Reggio in Practice at IDEA School

“Fluency is the goal. Children may not be fluent in every language, but proficiency will encourage communication, understanding, and integration.”

At the IDEA School, we believe that building fluency in Reggio languages rests on three types of engagement: engagement with content, self, and others. This is a holistic view that requires students to:

- Engage **content** by spending time exploring a variety of issues, ideas, and questions
- Engage **self** by developing strong **habits of mind** and be aware of their particular strengths and weaknesses
- Engage **others** by learning to make and sustain positive, healthy personal and professional relationships



Focusing on just one or two of these types of engagement is not enough. Like a three-legged stool, children need all three to succeed.

Grade Level Experiences and Expectations

IDEA School Early Childhood Fluency (K-1st): Engaging Content

Engaging Content: Provocations, Projects, and Field Trips

In **Early Childhood (K-1st)**, fundamental content areas like language and math are performed organically as children play indoors and outdoors throughout the day. The Early Childhood Center offers a variety of group and individual activities that stimulate deep curiosity and engagement. These activities are designed to allow students the freedom to safely explore their interests in a supportive environment as well as connect with each other and their collaborators. Activities include read alouds, math games, pretend play, and group discussions related to developmentally appropriate student interests. As an extension of the Center, K-1 students also participate in field trips that offer exposure to the natural surroundings and community of Tucson. Learning from these trips is incorporated into classroom activities, giving students the opportunity to continue to expand their fluency in the core content areas.

Early Childhood Center provocations often result in projects that serve as examples of critical thinking development. Examples include building structures with Magnatiles, designing a menu for a pretend restaurant, or creating a comic book.

Typical Early Childhood (K-1st) Day

Time	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
8-9am	Drop Off	Drop Off	Drop Off	Drop Off	Drop Off
9-9:30am	Family Group	Family Group	Family Group	Family Group	Family Group
9:30-10:00	EC Outside Play	EC Outside Play	EC Outside Play	EC Outside Play	EC Playformance
10:00-10:30am	Group time	Group Time	Group Time	Group Time	Playformance
10:30-11:30	Inside Exploration and Creative Time	Inside Exploration and Creative Time	Inside Exploration and Creative Time	Inside Exploration and Creative Time	Playformance
11:30am	EC Lunch	EC Lunch	EC Lunch	EC Lunch	EC Lunch
12-12:15pm	EC Outside Play	EC Outside Play	EC Outside Play	EC Outside Play	EC Workshops
12:15-1:00pm	EC Workshops	EC Workshops	EC Workshops	EC Workshops	EC Workshops
1:00-1:45pm	Outside Play	Outside Play	Outside Play	Outside Play	Outside Play
1:45-2:30	EC Read Aloud and Writing	EC Read Aloud and Writing	EC Read Aloud and Writing	EC Read Aloud and Writing	EC Read Aloud and Writing
2:30-3:00pm	Independent Reading	Independent Reading	<i>Early Release for Staff Meeting</i>	Independent Reading	Independent Reading
3:00-3:30pm	Family Group	Family Group		Family Group	Family Group

IDEA School Primary Grades Fluency (2nd-5th): Engaging Content

Workshops & Provocations

Each day in **Primary (2-5)** students are invited to work in content area centers - Art, Math, Science, Design & Engineering, Technology, and Humanities - with collaborators who offer engaging **workshops** in their subject matter areas. These workshops are composed of various activities and provocations that offer students practice in a practical application of the content area. Students participate in an average of 5-10 provocations throughout the week. There is no prescribed rotation and students are free to circulate through centers during the week depending on the activities that interest them. Most students may also work with students older and younger than themselves depending upon their interests. If they are not participating in a center workshop, students are free to choose a quiet activity in the library or we invite them to complete a math or language arts challenge. In addition, students have the option of outdoor free play in the wash supervised by at least two collaborators during two separate blocks during the day.

Expert Visits and Field Studies

To support workshop activity, we organize expert visits and field studies on a regular basis that offer students opportunities to interact with the greater Tucson natural environment and community. These activities offer exposure to multiple professions, vocations and perspectives, as well as the chance to explore the world beyond the classroom.

Projects

To encourage creative exploration beyond the provocations, all students conduct group and independent project work facilitated/supported by collaborators. A project may be as elaborate as a formal presentation or as simple as a story, structure, or piece of art that demonstrates fluency in one of the languages. As students progress through our program, we encourage them to choose projects that address problems of increasing complexity. While working on their projects, students apply the tools they have acquired in workshops and arrive at creative solutions that are documented in their student portfolios and on the parent photo sharing app *Seesaw*.

Typical Primary (2nd-5th) Day

Time	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
8-9am	Drop Off	Drop Off	Drop Off	Drop Off	Drop Off
9:00-9:30am	Family Group	Family Group	Family Group	Family Group	Family Group
9:30-10:30am	Workshops	Workshops	Workshops	Workshops	Workshops
10:30-11:30am	Outside Exploration	Outside Exploration	Outside Exploration	Outside Exploration	Outside Exploration
11:30	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:00-12:30	Read Aloud	Read Aloud	Read Aloud	Read Aloud	Playformance
12:30 - 1:30pm	Workshops/ Independent Study	Workshops/ Independent Study	Workshops/ Independent Study	Workshops/ Independent Study	Playformance
1:30 - 2:30pm	Outside Play	Outside Play	Outside Play	Outside Play	Outside Play
2:30 - 3:00pm	Independent Reading	Independent Reading	Early Release	Independent Reading	Independent Reading
3:00-3:30pm	Family Group	Family Group		Family Group	Family Group

IDEA School Middle School Fluency (6th-8th): Engaging Content

The IDEA **Middle School (6th-8th)** is a three-year program that extends the students' multiple-language fluency learned in Early Childhood and Primary and applies it to more complex topics and problems. Students begin when they are eleven years old (prior to Sept. 1). Students are expected to attend Middle School classes or "symposiums" that are held twice a week to share discoveries, discuss progress, and learn from collaborators and each other. At other times, students, work independently to complete requirements set forth by collaborators in a variety of content areas. These include:

- Community Service
- Literature
- Written Expression
- Math
- Science
- History and Government
- Geography
- Current Events
- Self-Management
- Practical Skills
- Fine Arts
- Foreign Language
- Technological Literacy
- Habits of Mind

These requirements ensure that students thoroughly and thoughtfully explore subject areas through reading, research, writing, problem solving, and practice. The subject areas are broad enough that everyone should be able to find something of interest; students with special interests may be able to follow them through several of the content areas.

Students are encouraged to draw from their fluency of all Reggio languages in order to meaningfully engage topics and reach a comprehensive understanding. Students are asked to write weekly to reflect on their work and to report on their progress.

Resulting projects are documented in their student portfolios. Observations regarding student habits of mind are also documented and presented to parents as part of the child's narrative assessment twice per year.

Additionally, students are expected to choose one project each year to express creatively at Exposition Night to the IDEA School community. All students receive support services such as public speaking coaching, etc. in order to make their experience as successful and enjoyable as possible

Symposiums

We strongly believe that before any student can solve big problems and affect powerful change, they need to look closely at issues and study them deeply. Only through this exploration and perspective-taking can one come to understand how to constructively demonstrate empathy and compassion for others.

In Symposium, students work together on discussing their individual curiosities and discoveries that come up through their independent work. They learn not only individually, but together, sharing their best practices and insights.

Capstone Project

As the student moves through the IDEA School program, they are continually building a body of work and set of narrative assessments that illustrate their growth, strengths, and interests. The culmination is the Middle School **Capstone Project**, a major exploratory project in 8th grade that demonstrates who they are, how they think about the world around them, and how they expect to engage the opportunities and problems they see in their community and the world.

We show our students the value of this exploration by allowing them to choose a topic of personal interest and provide literature, provocations, tools, media, experts, and other resources to support their exploration. Students are encouraged to apply the various Humanities, Science/Technology, Art, and Math languages, as well as the symposium skills they have developed at IDEA, in order to address the complexities of their chosen topic. In this way, students learn the value of curiosity, inquiry, and deep exploration of issues to guide action.

The following are examples of topics. However, we encourage students to reflect and let their own interests guide them:

- Understanding and managing insect species in the Sonoran Desert in environmentally friendly ways
- Building and managing an on-campus student store (or other business or social venture)
- Writing and publishing a children's book

Typical Middle School (6th-8th) Day

Time	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
8-9am	Drop Off				
9:00-9:30am	Family Group				
9:30-11:30am	Workshops/ Independent Study	Workshops/ Independent Study	Workshops/ Independent Study	Workshops/ Independent Study	Workshops/ Independent Study
11:30	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:00-12:30	Read Aloud	Read Aloud	Read Aloud	Read Aloud	Playformance
12:30 - 1:30pm	Workshops/ Independent Study	Workshops/ Independent Study	Workshops/ Independent Study	Workshops/ Independent Study	Playformance
1:30 - 2:30pm	Independent Study / Outside Play				
2:30 - 3:00pm	Independent Reading	Independent Reading	Early Release	Independent Reading	Independent Reading
3:00-3:30pm	Family Group	Family Group		Family Group	Family Group

All Students: Engaging Self and Others

Emotional Intelligence

We believe it is critical for young children to develop the capacities for self-awareness and communication as early as possible. **Research has shown that the average adult can only recognize and express three emotions: sadness, happiness, and anger. Healthy adults should be able to recognize and express, on average, 30 different emotions.** Fostering this level of self-awareness and expression is critical to resilience and success in life.

In order to nurture healthy relationships and richer and more meaningful knowledge acquisition in the Primary years, the Early Childhood program focuses on the practice of **emotional granularity - developing the capacity to precisely and accurately recognize and express a wide range of emotions.** This granularity not only allows children to feel more control over their lives, but helps collaborators better understand their interests, their obstacles to learning, and their ability to connect with others. In the Early Childhood Center, children are encouraged to communicate with the collaborators and each other in all activities. Verbal and written reflection help students become aware of their habits of mind, label them, and use them as tools for expression later in problem solving and conflict management.

For older students, social and emotional intelligence is vital to long-term academic, professional, and personal success. Expanding on each student's sense of emotional granularity, we facilitate group activities and discussions that invite in-depth personal identity and perspective-taking. These activities include discussions of likeness, difference, formal methods of conflict management, tactics of negotiation, and general strategies of diplomacy. As a result, our students become not only self-aware, but tolerant individuals, who recognize the value of building cultures of inclusivity. Empathy is nurtured as students identify their own strengths and values and use them to help others. The practice of transforming emotional granularity into effective interpersonal relationships is noted in the habits of mind observations of collaborators and presented to parents as part of the child's narrative assessment twice per year.

Family Groups

To support practical critical thinking and self/other awareness, **all** students begin and end the day in our **Family Groups**. Family Groups are composed of ten to fifteen students of all ages. During this time students participate in activities that encourage:

- getting to know each other more fully; develop empathy for one another
- exploring, discussing and evaluating their values and opinions
- listening to the opinions of others and relating to people of all ages
- learning the skills of problem-solving and group decision making

- becoming aware of and discussing values and expectations of the school community
- celebrating achievements and milestones
- learning to care for others who are younger and trust those who are older

After morning Family Group, students are dismissed to the Early Childhood Center, Primary Workshops, or Middle School Symposia. At the end of the day, students return to Family Groups for reflection and discussion. Details of these activities are covered in each grade-level's section in the handbook.

IDEA School Standards and Assessment

Standards

All workshops and provocations are informed by generally accepted cognitive development standards for typically developing children, including Common Core. However, we believe that children do not all learn at the same pace and with the same intensity, so we use these standards as milestones rather than goals. The great benefit of IDEA is our ability to give children the freedom to explore concepts with interest, creativity, and passion. Should a child want to dive deeper into an idea, we encourage them to do so rather than forcing them to move to the next “requirement.” We welcome standards that ground our activities in competencies that children across all schools share. However, we will not be limited by them or allow them to dictate the learning objectives of the child.

See the section **“General Standards & Competencies”** for a list of general standards for each school level: Early Childhood, Primary, and Middle School.

Assessment

Throughout the school year our students are assessed on how effectively they are practicing **Reggio language fluency** and the **habits of mind**.

These assessments provide parents with a window not only into their child’s intellectual growth, but also their social-emotional development. Full assessments are offered to parents twice a year and include:

Collaborator Written Assessments

Collaborators complete written assessments during the 2nd and 4th Quarter of the year. The assessment is narrative and serves as a tool to guide collaborators and parents on the kinds of supplemental experiences at school and home that students need to reinforce strengths and address opportunities for improvement.

Student Self-Assessment

Students engage in regular written and oral reflection on their work, and collaborators provide consistent 1-on-1 feedback to students on both academic skills and Reggio languages. Additionally, collaborators maintain online portfolios of students’ work for review with parents, and display/reflect on a piece of work of their choosing at each Exposition Night.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

These conferences occur twice a year (Nov and May). Collaborator and student assessments are reviewed along with the student portfolio. Parents are encouraged to ask questions and explore

creative ways to engage the child about opportunities for improvement.

Understanding the Narrative Assessment

Narrative assessments are used in progressive schools throughout the country to give parents a richer picture of their child's development than standardized assessment can offer. At IDEA, we use them as tools to deeply inform the conversations between parents and collaborators in parent-teacher conferences.

Our written assessments focus deeply on the application of the habits of mind across disciplines.

Discipline at IDEA School

“The difficult child is the child who is unhappy. He is at war with himself; and in consequence he is at war with the world.” -A.S. Neill

We believe it is extremely important to support our children emotionally and socially. We provide a safe, connected environment where children are encouraged and learn to express their needs and feelings. As collaborators, we model the language of healthy conflict resolution and self-regulation.

We do not use time-outs, punishment, or shaming. Children are required to respect the schoolwide agreements: *Be Safe, Be Kind, Be Respectful* and fulfill their responsibilities. If a student violates any of these agreements, we work with them to make amends with anyone who has been affected by their action. Occasionally, when a child resists our attempts at redirection, the collaborator and child will move to a separate space to meet and problem solve one-on-one.

In general, we know that children who “act out” are likely struggling to express unmet needs and/or they do not feel heard by us. In our meeting with the child we apply the following problem solving strategy that encourages healthy emotional expression:

- We ask the child what they need
- We tell the child what we need
- Together, we make a list of possible ways for both of our needs to get met
- We pick the solution that works for us both

If a child violates the agreements more than we deem acceptable during the school week, they will then be unable to leave the campus for field trips, including Playformance, until they can reassure us that they are able to be safe, kind, and respectful.

For students having consistent problems, a parent-student-staff conference will be arranged and a plan for improvement will be created.

In Middle School, if a student is asked to leave a required M.S. class time due to disruptive or other hurtful behaviors, parents will be notified immediately. If a student misses 5 or more Middle School classes, they will not be given a passing evaluation.

We believe it is critical for parents to encourage healthy emotional awareness and expression at home. Parents are encouraged to read the book *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen* by Adele Faber. It is a wonderful guide on how to build mutual respect and coachability into parent messaging. Any questions about the strategies in the book can be directed to Jaime Johnson.

In addition, we recommend that all students understand their activities at school through the following Mayan poem. We encourage parents to discuss this poem with their children and help them find meaning in its message.

En Lak'esh

Tú eres mi otro yo.

You are my other me.

Si te hago daño a ti,

If I do harm to you,

Me hago daño a mi mismo.

I do harm to myself.

Si te amo y respeto,

If I love and respect you,

Me amo y respeto yo.

I love and respect myself.

Appendix A: General Standards & Competencies (Content)

Early Childhood (K-1st)

General literacy standards

- Ask and answer questions about key details in a text
- Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses
- Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print
- Write confidently using invented and phonetic spellings
- Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.

General math standards

- Understand addition, subtraction, and strategies for addition and subtraction within 20
- Understand whole number relationships and place value, including grouping in tens and ones
- Understand linear measurement and measuring lengths as iterating length units
- Reason about attributes of, compose, and decompose geometric shapes

Primary (2nd-5th)

General literacy standards

- Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension
- Write opinion, informative, and narrative pieces
- Research to build and present knowledge
- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners

General math standards

- Add, subtract, multiply, and divide single to triple digit numbers
- Deconstruct and solve simple to complex word problems
- Add and subtract whole number and decimals, fractions, equivalent fractions
- Understand time, money, and basic measurement systems

Middle School (6th-8th)

General literacy standards

- Read for comprehension
- Evaluate and cite sources for research
- Document and organize new information
- Think critically about and reflect on new learning
- Create visual representations of learning
- Write, teach, and speak about that new learning

General math standards

- Solve one variable equations; order of operations
- Add, subtract fractions with unequal denominators
- Negative numbers
- Graphs, percents, exponents
- Geometry, graphing on the X-Y Coordinate system, Pythagorean theorem
- Advanced measurement systems

Appendix B: Parent FAQ

1. Why are there no worksheets, drills, repetition, or rigor in content areas?

Our objective is not to fill kids with facts and figures. Research shows that this does not prepare students for the workforce of today or tomorrow, nor does it support their love of learning. It also damages children's innate motivation to learn. Rather, we teach kids how to find the information they need. Also, we allow our students opportunities to practice curiosity, problem solving, perseverance, critical thinking, and pursuit of their interests and passions.

Also, in the absence of coercion, we see our students setting themselves to challenging tasks all of the time. Healthy risk-taking and perseverance are natural byproducts of the challenges we set before students during workshop times.

2. Why don't students take the AZmerit?

Standardized tests do not measure a child's confidence, creativity, ability to think critically and flexibly, curiosity, and the other habits of mind valued at our school and nurtured by our school environment. Our assessment protocol gives us a complete view of who your child is and what she or he needs. This serves as a much more useful tool that helps us to partner with you to guide them along their path toward their full potential.

3. Why do students have so much freedom and choice during the day? How do I know they are getting what they need?

Our students have freedom, but not license. This means freedom to pursue learning in lots of different ways, but not license to interfere with the learning of others. This is an area where "Be kind, be safe, be respectful" come into play.

As we know, choice is vital to intrinsic motivation and deeper learning, and this is true of all age groups. Choice is empowering as it allows students to own the way they spend their time. Choice ensures that our students remain engaged, curious, and motivated learners. Collaborators keep thorough documentation that allows us to monitor the way our students spend their time and encourage healthy time-management. Collaborators and parents are responsible for providing a variety of experiences encouraging the development of fluency in multiple Reggio languages, and from there our children choose. This model helps ensure they grow up to be well-rounded human beings with high levels of self-efficacy and direction.

4. What is a provocation? How are they chosen? How are they documented? Are students required to do all of them? How can I help?

Provocations are basically questions or problems that students explore in their content-area centers. Collaborators create provocations based on their expertise and the known or presumed interests of the students at our school. Collaborators document the habits of mind and languages being practiced by the students and other notes relevant to how they engaged the day's provocation in their center. Students are not required to engage every provocation, but we find that most of our students enjoy a variety of experiences. If you have an area of expertise, or an experience, you would like to share with our students, please let us know!

5. How are project topics chosen? How can I help?

We decide on project topics the same way we plan for other experiences offered at the school: through careful consideration of the interests of all involved. When students choose a project idea, we work one-on-one with them to ensure the project is both engaging and rigorous enough to push them beyond their comfort zone and help them grow and build fluency.

Projects should also produce a product of some kind. Parents or other experts are welcome to facilitate a project as part of our workshop times in any of our centers. If you have a project you would like to facilitate with our students, please let Jaime know.

6. Do students receive homework? What activities can we do at home to support the learning my child is engaged in at IDEA School?

Our number one recommendation is to read together every night.

We recommend a range of fiction and nonfiction on subjects that interest your child. Ask questions and encourage discussion. Find ways to connect these topics to the activities your child is involved in at school and elsewhere in their daily lives. Listen for connections your child is making and encourage their creativity and critical thinking. Show sincere interest, even fascination, in the things that your child finds exciting about different topics and content areas. Model your own curiosity about the world.

Work with your child to identify tasks they can own at home, ways they can contribute to the household. Encourage them to work both independently and together with the family to fulfill these tasks. Talk with your child about what they find challenging or any resistance they may have toward these activities. Help them develop a sense of intrinsic motivation, initiative, personal responsibility, and willingness to give and receive feedback. ***Avoid rewards and punishments (carrots and sticks), as these strategies actually harm intrinsic motivation, which is crucial to the development of responsibility and self-direction.***

Limit screen time to one to three hours per week and be conscientious of the example you set. Dedicate times in your day and week during which nobody's on their phone at all. Create and practice family rituals that encourage communication and connection. Your child should have plenty of time to practice engaging himself or herself, as well.

If you currently allow more screen-time than this, have a dialogue with your child about why cutting back on screen time and spending that same time doing productive things together or individually will not only benefit him or her, but also feel better. You may need to help your child make other choices, but after some practice, they will adapt.

7. You mention fostering communication, compassion, empathy, and kindness. What activities can we do at home to support these goals?

We believe effective communication and mutual respect start at home, so we strongly encourage all parents to read the book *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk* by A. Faber and E. Mazlish. Read and discuss the book with another grown-up (friend, partner) and look for opportunities to practice the communication techniques outlined in the book with your children.

Keep in mind that as a human being, your child has fundamental needs to feel appreciated, supported, and connected with. Sometimes he or she may not have the language to express big or challenging feelings. You can help by simply listening to your child, allowing him/her time and space to put words to their feelings, and modeling this practice. (Eg: "You were really disappointed when x happened." "You felt hurt when y happened. I get that.")

Model compassion, empathy, and kindness in how you communicate with your child. Get on their level (eye-to-eye, close enough to talk without yelling) and speak with kindness. This does not mean you can't be firm and model communicating what you need. It's just modeling how to do it kindly. (Eg: "I need to know that you hear me when I'm talking with you. That's really important to me," rather than, "Why don't you ever listen!?" Or, "I'm going to help you tune into me, because I know sometimes that's hard to do," before asking for what you need.)

Apologize when you make a mistake. We all make mistakes. Apologizing acknowledges that, and models empathy and healthy communication at the same time.

8. If my child has an issue with another child at school, what should I advise my child to do? When should I get involved? Who do I contact to discuss the issue?

Your child may be focused on the “bad thing” that “so and so did to me.” First, you can help him or her identify the apparent/possible needs that both children had in the situation. Then, you can help him or her problem solve to achieve a desired resolution.

The process of maturing socially and emotionally is challenging, and handling conflict well and productively takes practice. We want to encourage families to talk to their children about how the situation arose, and reflect on how it could have been handled differently. Talking about problems in these ways makes them positive opportunities for learning and growth. These discussions not only encourage resilience, but the emotional granularity (the ability to identify specific emotions) that is so important to self-awareness and effective communication.

However, if you continue to be concerned about anything that has happened during the school day, please send a gentle email to your child’s family group collaborator explaining the situation and your concerns. We are committed to enforcing our discipline process, investigating issues, encouraging communication among parties, and solving the problem in a civilized and diplomatic manner. In addition, please encourage your child to approach any collaborator and ask for help when they need it if an incident happens during the day. Reassure them that our most important job is to make sure that everyone feels and is safe at school -- and their help is vital to that.

If your child continues to feel there is a problem, please contact your family group collaborator to schedule a meeting to discuss possible solutions.

9. I think my Early Childhood student is ready to work in one of the Primary centers. Will you move them up?

We find that most Early Childhood students excel in various skills at different rates. Our Early Childhood collaborators are trained to encourage and extend practice in all of the content areas in ways that challenge the students. In the EC Center, children learn skills foundational to their development. These are so important and we see no reason to rush our youngest students through this critical phase.

Primary centers require more than just content area knowledge. They require participants to have emotional granularity (the willingness and ability to be self-reflective and communicate their feelings), as well as the ability to ask thoughtful questions, work independently/as part of a team, focus, patience, and listening. After some time spent exclusively in the EC center during workshop time, Early Childhood students who demonstrate the combination of skills and habits of mind required for Primary Center activity will be invited to join in developmentally appropriate activities in the Primary Centers.

10. Will my child be prepared for high school when they graduate from IDEA School?

Our students who have spent most or all of their school experience with us leave our school as expert learners. They are aware of their strengths and passions and have practice applying them to real-world objectives. They have a growth mindset that says, “If I don’t know this subject/this skill, I can learn it.” They know how to find the answers they need and ask for help when needed, from both peers and adults.

Their curiosity and engagement in learning remains intact. They still *enjoy* learning. When they are faced with challenges, they have the persistence and confidence to take them on; they’ve had lots of practice with this.

Our graduates are self-aware, resilient, and curious learners. They have plenty of practice thinking critically across diverse situations. They’ve engaged in both individual and collaborative work, many many times. They are students who will succeed wherever they choose to go.

Through the experience of similar schools and that of successful homeschooling/unschooling parents, we know that graduates of our program will do well in high school and beyond.

11. I’m still not clear on how learning happens without strict standards and repetition. And the habits of learning are hard to visualize. Can you offer a demonstration?

Yes! We will offer parent workshops. In them, parents learn about the differences between traditional education and the Reggio Emilia model we practice, as well as gain experience being a “student” in the IDEA Classroom. Workshop schedules will be announced soon. Keep an eye out!