



PROGRAM HANDBOOK

*"Todos los niños del mundo
Vamos una rueda hacer
Y en mil lenguas cantaremos
En paz queremos crecer."*

-José Martí

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| <i>¡BIENVENIDOS A LA ESCUELITA!</i> | 4 |
| History of La Escuelita Bilingual School | 4 |
| School Philosophy | 4 |
| Mission Statement | 5 |
| Anti-Bias Statement | 5 |
| <i>EDUCATIONAL MODEL</i> | 6 |
| Dual Language Program | 6 |
| Curriculum Overview | 7 |
| Cultural Arts Program | 8 |
| Social Justice Focus | 8 |
| Observation and Assessment | 9 |
| Support for Neurodivergent Learners and Complex Needs | 9 |
| <i>PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS</i> | 10 |
| Waddler Program | 10 |
| <i>Lactation Promotion and Support Policy</i> | 11 |
| Toddler Program | 12 |
| <i>Toilet Training Approach</i> | 12 |
| Preschool and Prekinder Program | 14 |
| <i>Kindergarten Readiness Focus</i> | 15 |
| <i>COMMUNITY BUILDING</i> | 16 |
| Families’ Role in the Community | 16 |
| Community Partnerships | 16 |
| Classroom Communication Forums | 18 |
| Community Code of Conduct | 19 |
| <i>Zero-Tolerance Towards Discrimination</i> | 20 |
| <i>VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT</i> | 21 |
| <i>DAILY OPERATIONS</i> | 22 |
| Hours of Operation | 22 |
| Emergency Closures | 23 |
| Daily Schedule | 24 |
| Drop-Off And Pick-Up Procedures | 25 |
| Facility Information | 27 |
| <i>HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES</i> | 28 |
| Daily Health Practices | 28 |
| Safety Practices | 30 |
| <i>Emergency Comfort Kit</i> | 31 |
| Neighborhood Safety | 31 |
| Comprehensive Policies – Overview | 32 |
| <i>CLASSROOM PRACTICES</i> | 33 |
| Parent Information | 33 |
| Classroom Numbers and Staffing Ratios | 33 |
| Positive Guidance and Behavior Management | 34 |
| Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting | 34 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| The Outdoor Classroom | 35 |
| Nap And Resting Time Policy | 36 |
| Brightwheel | 36 |
| Show and Tell | 36 |
| Toys from Home | 37 |
| Birthday Celebrations | 37 |
| Holiday Celebrations | 37 |
| Religious Activity | 37 |
| Classroom Donations | 37 |
| <i>MEAL SERVICE</i> | <i>38</i> |
| La Escuelita Menu and Meal Service | 38 |
| <i>Tree Nut Policy</i> | 39 |
| <i>Box Lunch Requirements</i> | 39 |
| <i>Catered Lunch</i> | 39 |
| Food Allergies | 40 |
| <i>POLICY AND PROCEDURES</i> | <i>41</i> |
| Waiting List and Admission Procedures | 41 |
| Transition Policy | 41 |
| Accounting Policies | 42 |
| Confidentiality Policy | 42 |
| Family Dynamics Policy | 43 |
| <i>Restraining Order Policy</i> | 44 |
| Secured Building Policy | 45 |
| Classroom Video Surveillance Policy | 46 |
| Media Release Policy | 47 |
| Field Trip Policy | 48 |
| Transportation Policy | 48 |
| Conflict of Interest Policy | 49 |
| Grievance Procedures | 50 |
| Termination of Care Policy | 50 |
| Intellectual Property Policy | 51 |
| <i>EMPLOYEE INFORMATION</i> | <i>52</i> |
| Staff Qualifications and Roles | 52 |
| Mandatory Training and Requirements | 52 |
| Staff Professional Development | 53 |
| <i>In-Service Training Closures</i> | 54 |
| Staff Appreciation | 54 |

¡BIENVENIDOS A LA ESCUELITA!

Thank you for choosing La Escuelita Bilingual School. We are honored to be a part of your child's educational journey. As we embark on this adventure together, we look forward to many opportunities for collaboration, planning, reflection, and negotiation regarding your child's educational goals.

Our Program Handbook serves as a framework to guide some of this process. It provides an overview of our practice's foundation and the principles underpinning our educational philosophy. However, our ongoing collaboration will genuinely pave the path for your child's holistic development.

History of La Escuelita Bilingual School

La Escuelita Bilingual School is a bilingual-bicultural program established by Carmen and Jose Massó as a home childcare center in 1979. Driven by their passion for nurturing bilingual and cultural development, they initially established La Escuelita Bilingual School as a home childcare center. As parents, they recognized the significance of catering to their children's unique linguistic and cultural needs, sowing the seeds of their vision in a humble home setting.

As time passed, La Escuelita blossomed into a fully licensed daycare center in Seattle's vibrant University District. The school's mission was clear: to serve the community's diverse ethnic and linguistic tapestry while embracing the ideals of social justice. The Massó family's dedication to providing high-quality early childhood education remained unwavering, ensuring La Escuelita's status as a family-run and operated institution for over four and a half decades.

Today, La Escuelita Bilingual School proudly boasts two locations: one in the charming Greenlake neighborhood and the other in the vibrant South Seattle—Columbia City area. Over the years, the school has forged deep connections with local families, established a reputation for exceptional care, and earned the respect of the early childhood community.

La Escuelita's commitment to bilingual education was recognized with the prestigious KCTS 9 Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Early Childhood Bilingual Education. This honor, bestowed upon La Escuelita as the first preschool recipient, is a testament to the school's dedication to fostering linguistic diversity and cultural understanding.

La Escuelita Bilingual School remains a beacon of quality early childhood education, offering a warm and nurturing environment where children can thrive intellectually, socially, and emotionally. With its deeply rooted commitment to bilingualism and cultural inclusivity, La Escuelita continues to be a cherished institution for countless families in Seattle.

School Philosophy

At La Escuelita, we believe in a strengths-based approach to education. We focus on building upon each child's strengths and talents while addressing areas for growth. We value creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving, and we strive to create a learning environment that is both challenging and supportive. We understand that every child is unique, and we tailor our educational programs to meet the individual needs of each student. We offer various academic, social, and artistic exploration opportunities so every child can find their passions and develop their full potential.

Parent involvement is essential to a child's success in school. We encourage parents to actively participate in their child's education and provide many opportunities for parents to connect with teachers and administrators. We are committed to working in partnership with families to create a nurturing and supportive learning environment for all children. Together, we can help your child reach their full potential and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Mission Statement

La Escuelita offers a dual-language early childhood curriculum that promotes the holistic development of each child within the context of their home culture and language. The following goals guide our mission:

- Encourage each child's self-appreciation as a competent individual in all learning domains (physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and creative).
- Help children recognize and respect the similarities and differences among themselves.
- Incorporate children's interests and life events into daily activities to foster learning and problem-solving skills.
- Equip children with the skills and attitudes necessary for successful schooling.
- Promote the development of English and Spanish bilingualism and biliteracy through a dual-language model.
- Validate and foster respect for all languages and cultures represented in the program.
- Educate children to resist biases, reject negative cultural stereotypes, and cultivate a positive cultural self-identity.

Anti-Bias Statement

La Escuelita Bilingual School is committed to creating an environment that is bias-free and culturally democratic. To this end, the school embraces the following Anti-Bias goals:

1. To promote positive identity development in all children, celebrating their race, ethnicity, gender, ability, religion, or sexual orientation.
2. To challenge negative stereotypes and prejudices about different groups of people.
3. To help children develop empathy and authentic relationships with people from diverse backgrounds.
4. To provide children with the skills and knowledge they need to challenge bias and discrimination in their own lives and be able to advocate for others when they face bias.
5. To create a school community that is welcoming, supportive of all families, and inclusive of their backgrounds.

EDUCATIONAL MODEL

La Escuelita offers educational programming designed to nurture children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Through a balanced approach, children explore, grow, and build a strong foundation for success. The program includes a dual-language curriculum, cultural arts, and a focus on social justice. It promotes collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. Families can expect an inclusive learning environment that values diversity and fosters the connection between home, school, and community. This section outlines our educational philosophy, goals, and strategies.

Dual Language Program

The dual language program at La Escuelita provides instruction in both Spanish and English. We recognize that home language and culture are interdependent and play a critical role in children's development. Its incorporation and validation are key to children's self-esteem, development, and learning. We use a teacher-based language plan, which means teachers speak their home language with the children in the classroom. When children come together in a large or small group for a learning activity, the language spoken by the classroom teacher will determine the language expectations. Teachers organize instruction so the children have equal opportunities to facilitate language development. During the week, the children will have a balance of first language and second language use in small and large group time. During interest areas, children will interact with each other in the language of choice but will be encouraged to respond to the teacher in the language used by the teacher.

Carmen Masso, the founder of La Escuelita, and Dr. Sharon Cronin are the co-authors of *Soy Bilingüe*, a book that explores the development of bilingual and bicultural children. The book delves into the dynamics that bilingual-bicultural families encounter as they strive to maintain their cultural identity within a dominant culture. It also highlights the critical role of bilingual educators in this process. Since its inception, *Soy Bilingüe* has become more than just a book. It has evolved into a comprehensive curriculum and a teacher credentialing program offered through the Center for Linguistic and Cultural Democracy.

Our curriculum aligns with the goals of the **Soy Bilingüe** program, which emphasizes:

- **Language and Literacy Development:** Enhancing proficiency in both Spanish and English to support academic success and effective communication.
- **Collaboration and Community Building:** Encouraging cooperative learning and fostering community among students, families, and educators.
- **Cultural Relevancy and Active Teaching:** Integrating culturally relevant materials and active teaching methods to make learning meaningful and engaging.
- **Imagination and Cultural Expression:** Promoting creativity and allowing children to express themselves through their cultural lenses.
- **Bicultural Voice and Cross-Cultural Competency:** Developing the ability to navigate and appreciate multiple cultures, enhancing social and academic interactions.
- **Critical Thinking and Conscientization:** Encouraging critical thinking skills and awareness of social dynamics to empower informed and thoughtful individuals.
- **Coaching and Accountability:** Providing guidance and fostering accountability in teachers for their personal and academic growth.

Curriculum Overview

La Escuelita's Early Childhood Curriculum focuses on all essential learning domains, including cognitive, social, emotional, language, creative, and physical development. Our curriculum is thoughtfully designed to engage children through routines and play-based learning, fostering a sense of security and exploration in their daily experiences.

La Escuelita's curriculum was developed collaboratively by its teachers through a year-long process of monthly meetings. During these sessions, teachers planned activities aligned with the school's philosophy and anti-bias goals. When MariSol Masso, daughter of the founders and La Escuelita's first client, assumed leadership, she took the curriculum to the next level. She identified a rotating cycle of skills for children to develop and incorporated biographies and cultural arts into the program. Additionally, she created an innovative method to implement and evaluate these skills, known as *MCORE: Modeling, Curriculum, Observations, Routine, and Environment*.

- **MODEL:** Teachers model the skill for the child through interaction, guidance, and the development of critical thinking skills.
- **CURRICULUM:** Teachers explicitly teach skills through planned activities, such as circle time, small group work, or individualized learning opportunities.
- **OBSERVATIONS:** Teachers observe how children naturally develop the skill during planned curriculum activities, play, and social interactions.
- **ROUTINE:** Children strengthen the skill through repetition during their daily routines.
- **ENVIRONMENT:** Skills are reinforced through the classroom's environmental setup, the materials provided, and the learning experiences created in the play areas.

Characteristics of the La Escuelita ECE Curriculum:

The La Escuelita ECE Curriculum allows children to learn holistically. It focuses on the interrelatedness of all curriculum components, helping children acquire essential learning tools. The integration builds on and acknowledges the relationship that exists in all matters. Learning is done primarily through hands-on experiences, reflects children's interests and choices, helps develop age-appropriate skills, and is centered on the goals of a collaborative community.

- 1) Provide experiences that develop children's disposition towards learning, skills, and content.
- 2) Experiences that help connect content learning with the curriculum components.
- 3) Learning activities that allow for scaffolding of a wide range of developmental levels in a classroom
- 4) Implement activities that are teacher-directed as well as child-directed and initiated.
- 5) Plan activities for children to participate in as a large, small group, and individual.
- 6) Activities that foster both creative and critical thinking
- 7) Activities based on children's interests, choices, cultural context, and family pathways
- 8) Activities that foster the development of skills needed to coexist in a collaborative and socially democratic community
- 9) Ensure that play, exploration, experimentation, and discovery are at the core of all children's learning.
- 10) Experiences that teach children to honor the living earth and care for the natural environment.

Cultural Arts Program

The Cultural Arts Program is an integral component of the school curriculum. Our goal is to develop competent bilingual, bicultural students who will be successful in school. The cultural arts play a dominant role in this developmental process. We strive to incorporate our diverse community's many voices and art forms within the curriculum. We invite guests and artists from the community to participate in developing our curriculum activities. We also encourage participation in community events as part of the learning experience. Artists, performers, and cultural art instructors work with classroom staff to provide enriching cultural art instruction and activities for the children, including preparation for school performances and special school events. The goals of the cultural arts program include the following:

- Integrate artists from our diverse community in Music, Dance, Art, Literature and Drama.
- Introduce the many ways of interpreting ideas into art.
- Assist children in rethinking the ways our diverse community has been represented and misrepresented in our communities.
- Assist children to think critically about the myths and stereotypes of our diverse communities.
- Introduce children to positive role models and knowledgeable members of our diverse community.
- Introduce children to authentic art forms not appropriated by mainstream culture.
- Assist children to learn the skills necessary to become artists and performers in the school's performance events.
- Encourage children to develop the confidence to present themselves in front of a large group.
- Encourage children to learn how to share a creative space for individuality and group collaboration.

Social Justice Focus

La Escuelita Bilingual School believes all children deserve to grow up in a world where they feel valued and respected. The school's Anti-Bias Curriculum helps children develop critical thinking skills, empathy, and understanding to create a more just and equitable society. Particular attention is given to each child's ethnic identity development. We assist children in identifying their cultural strengths, exploring the many contributions of our diverse community, and learning how to address issues of bias and oppression. We also assist all children in developing the cross-cultural skills needed to become successful within mainstream "American" culture.

This curriculum acknowledges that children come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, and it aims to create a safe and welcoming environment where all voices are heard and respected. Central to the Anti-Bias Curriculum is the belief that every child deserves an equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of race, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, or any other differentiating factor.

The school's teachers facilitate discussions and activities encouraging children to challenge stereotypes, identify biases, and develop a deep understanding of themselves and others. Through interactive lessons, storytelling, and hands-on projects, students engage with diverse perspectives and learn to embrace their own unique identities. Children are encouraged to participate in service-learning projects, advocate for causes they care about, and develop a sense of responsibility towards their local and global communities. The school empowers students to become agents of positive transformation by fostering empathy and a commitment to social change.

Here are some specific examples of how this is put into practice in the classrooms:

- **Celebrating Diversity:** Children study biographies of remarkable leaders and innovators from underrepresented communities and communities of color, inspiring them to challenge preconceived notions of success and promote inclusivity in leadership and role models.
- **Inclusive Resources:** Teachers use books, videos, and other educational materials that reflect the world's diversity. These resources expose children to various cultures, perspectives, and experiences.
- **Self-Identity Exploration:** Children are encouraged to investigate and discuss their own identities. They share their experiences with their peers, creating an environment of understanding and empathy.
- **Challenging Stereotypes:** Teachers facilitate discussions, activities, and role-playing exercises that challenge stereotypes and prejudices about various groups of people. Children learn to question preconceived notions and recognize the common humanity all share.
- **Historical Awareness:** Children learn about the history of racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. They develop critical thinking skills by examining how these systems of oppression continue to impact society today.
- **Practical Application:** Teachers provide children with opportunities to challenge bias and discrimination in the classroom and in their daily lives. They learn to resist injustice, promote equality, and create a more inclusive world.

Observation and Assessment

La Escuelita uses a comprehensive assessment cycle to support each child's unique development. Our process includes:

- **Daily Observations:** Teachers document children's interactions, play, and language use to understand their growth and needs.
- **Portfolios:** Collections of children's work, photos, and achievements showcase their progress across all developmental areas.
- **Family Input:** Insight into each child's family is crucial: Registration forms, family questionnaires, and regular communication help us honor your child's background and needs.
- **Parent-Teacher Collaboration:** Conferences are held annually (or as needed) to discuss your child's strengths, developmental goals, and future learning plans.

Skills Checklist:

As part of MCORE, teachers use the MCORE developmental skills checklist to evaluate and document children's milestones each month. This ensures a clear understanding of each child's progress and areas for growth.

Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs):

Each child has personalized goals updated monthly to ensure they thrive. ILPs guide our teaching strategies and activities to meet their developmental milestones.

Support for Neurodivergent Learners and Complex Needs:

La Escuelita is committed to inclusivity. In the case of a unique learning difference or complex need being identified through our assessments, parent observations, or a child's healthcare provider, we will collaborate directly with the family and therapeutic agency to offer on-site services and create a tailored ILP. These plans ensure targeted support for each child's specific needs.

If a child's diagnosis requires smaller class sizes, specialized full-time therapeutic interventions, or falls outside our scope, La Escuelita will work with families to provide referrals to appropriate outside agencies to better meet the child's needs.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

At La Escuelita, each age-specific program is designed to nurture every child's growth while preparing them for future educational success. Our programs build progressively, creating a seamless transition through the developmental stages from infancy to preschool, ensuring a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

Waddler Program

The Waddler Program at La Escuelita is for children transitioning from infancy to early toddlerhood. Children are developing greater independence, mobility, and awareness of routines at this stage. Our program is structured to support these new abilities while fostering confidence, emotional growth, and social skills. We provide a nurturing environment where children can explore, learn, and gradually take on more responsibility for their daily routines.

Our experienced teachers work closely with families to guide children through these crucial milestones while respecting each child's unique pace of development. The Waddler Program emphasizes fostering a sense of routine in feeding, sleeping, hand washing, and outdoor activities. By the end of the year, we aim for children to feel secure and self-assured in their daily routines and classroom interactions.

Waddler Program Goals

By the end of the year, we aim for children in the Waddler Program to feel confident in the following areas:

1. **Feeding Routine:** Use a cup and eat at the table with minimal assistance.
2. **Sleeping Routine:** Transition to taking only one nap per day.
3. **Hand Washing Routine:** Understand the importance of and when to wash hands (e.g., before meals, after outdoor play).
4. **Outdoor Adventures:** Be able to climb stairs with support and participate in group walks using a walking rope.
5. **Academic Routine:** Be able to participate in planned group activities. Begin cleaning up after themselves and developing a sense of responsibility.

While toilets are available in the Waddler Program, **toilet training is not a primary goal**. Parents can refer to the [Toilet Training Policy](#) for more details about the toilet training process.

What Parents Need to Provide

Parents are to supply the following items for their child's daily care in the Waddler Program:

- **Diapers and Wipes:** At least seven disposable diapers per day.
- **Clothing:** Extra sets of clothing to accommodate accidents or messy activities.
- **Blankets:** Small, lightweight blankets that fit in their cubbies
- **Personal Items:** All items, including blankets and extra clothing, must be appropriately sized to fit in their child's cubby or locker.

The Waddler Program partners with parents and provides a supportive environment. It helps children gain independence and confidence and prepares them for the following developmental stages.

Lactation Promotion and Support Policy

We recognize and support nursing as the optimal form of nutrition for infants. We are committed to creating a welcoming environment where lactating parents feel supported and valued. Our program provides designated spaces for nursing, ensures proper storage and handling of human milk, and encourages feeding plans tailored to each child's needs.

Staff members are trained in nursing best practices, including feeding on demand, recognizing hunger cues, and promoting the emotional bond between parent and child. Parents are encouraged to familiarize themselves with our detailed *Lactation Promotion and Support Policy*, which outlines additional guidelines for storage, handling, and safe feeding practices.

For more information, please refer to the *Lactation Promotion and Support Policy*, available upon request.

Bottle Feeding in the Waddler Program

We fully support families deciding to continue supplementing their child's diet with formula or human milk after their child turns one year old. The following applies to bottle-fed children entering the Waddler Program:

- Parents must provide labeled bottles each day, which will be sent home at the end of the day.
- There is no minimum requirement for the number of bottles, as bottle feeding at this stage is supplemental.
- Bottles are given to children seated at the table in compliance with safety regulations.
- Children are not bottle-fed while lying down or with a propped bottle for safety reasons.
- Our teachers will collaborate with parents on transitioning from bottles to sippy cups for human and whole milk.

Toddler Program

The Toddler Program at La Escuelita supports children as they build on the foundational skills developed in infancy and early toddlerhood. At this stage, toddlers are becoming increasingly independent, curious, and eager to assert control over their daily routines. Our program provides a structured environment that encourages children to explore their world, develop social skills, and gain confidence in self-care activities such as eating, toileting, and hand washing.

With the guidance of experienced teachers, toddlers will learn to follow routines, participate in group activities, and begin practicing skills necessary for independent daily living. The program's significant focus is toilet training in a supportive and child-centered way. By the end of the year, we aim for toddlers to feel confident in their ability to participate in routines independently and to feel a strong sense of accomplishment in their social, emotional, and physical development.

Toddler Program Goals

By the end of the year, children in the Toddler Program should feel confident in the following areas:

1. **Feeding Routine:** Eat independently and serve their food at the table.
2. **Sleeping Routine:** Sleep independently and follow a consistent nap routine.
3. **Toilet Training:** Follow the steps to use the bathroom with support, gradually working toward independence.
4. **Hand Washing Routine:** Follow the steps to wash hands independently, understanding when and why it is necessary.
5. **Academic Routine:** Participate in both large and small group activities. Open and close an activity with minimal assistance, developing early self-regulation skills.

Toilet Training Approach

Toilet training is a significant milestone during the toddler years, but its success depends on the child's physical, emotional, and social readiness. At La Escuelita, we understand that children must feel safe, comfortable, and supported when beginning this process. Toilet training involves:

- **Readiness:** Parents and teachers will agree on the right time to start based on the child's development.
- **Encouragement and Praise:** Celebrate success and handle setbacks with patience.
- **Consistency:** Toilet training must be practiced both at home and at the center for it to be successful.
- **Equipment:** The center provides child-sized flushing toilets, which help children feel comfortable using toilets in the real world.

Please note that children must be toilet trained before entering the Preschool Program. Since preschool classrooms are not equipped with diaper-changing areas, it is essential to collaborate on this milestone. When the child is ready, our staff will share the [Toilet Training Policy](#), outlining the steps for a smooth and supportive process.

What Parents Need to Provide

Parents are to supply the following items to support their child's care in the Toddler Program:

- **Diapers/Training Diapers and Wipes:**
 - At least five disposable or training diapers (with side openings for easy removal) per day.
 - Wipes for diaper changes and hygiene
- **Training Underwear:** When ready, wear thick training underwear for toilet training and change clothing at least three times daily.
- **Clothing:**
 - Loose-fitting bottoms with elastic waists (to make it easier for children to pull them up and down during toilet training).
 - Extra sets of clothing to accommodate accidents or messy activities.
- **Bottle Feeding:** Children who bottle-feed for supplementation will only bottle-feed with their parents at home. Teachers will help wean children off bottle feeding during the day, and children will drink from small cups at school.
- **Blankets:** Small, lightweight blankets that fit in personal cubbies
- **Personal Items:** All items, including blankets, extra clothing, and personal belongings, must be appropriately sized to fit into the child's cubby or locker.

The toddler program focuses on independence, routine, and supportive toilet training, and it is designed to prepare children for a successful transition to the Preschool Program.

Preschool and Prekinder Program

The Preschool and Prekinder Program at La Escuelita ensures children are well-prepared for kindergarten's academic, social, and emotional demands while fostering their growth as active, thoughtful community members. Children learn to express their ideas clearly, problem-solve collaboratively, and develop their "voice" as community advocates at this stage. They are encouraged to care for their environment, respect their peers, and begin making decisions that reflect empathy and fairness.

In addition to nurturing these social-emotional skills, the program strongly emphasizes kindergarten readiness. Children will engage in a structured daily routine that introduces key academic concepts, promotes independence, and allows them to practice self-care. Our approach blends academic preparation, focusing on developing resilience, leadership, and community responsibility.

We believe that children can actively participate in their communities—even at a young age. Through guided discussions, role-play, and opportunities to participate in class decisions, children see themselves as advocates for fairness and inclusion. Our teachers encourage them to express their thoughts and opinions in ways that positively impact their peers and the world around them.

By the end of the year, children will have developed the skills necessary to transition to kindergarten confidently. They will have begun to establish their voice in the classroom and beyond.

Preschool and Prekinder Program Goals

By the end of the year, children in the Preschool and Prekinder Program will feel confident in the following areas:

1. **Academic Routine:**
 - Participate actively in circle time, contributing ideas and following the group's structure.
 - Engage in structured small group time, following directions, sharing materials, and collaborating with peers.
 - Start and finish activities independently, learning to manage their time and stay focused on tasks.
2. **Independent Self-Care:**
 - Feed themselves and go to the bathroom independently without needing assistance.
 - Follow hygiene rules such as proper hand washing, nose wiping, and hygienically using the bathroom.
 - Function throughout the day without needing an extended rest period, adjusting to a school-like daily schedule.
3. **Hand Washing Routine:**
 - Independently wash hands before meals, after bathroom use, and at other appropriate times, understanding the importance of hygiene.
4. **Outdoor Exploration:**
 - Participate in extended outdoor adventures, exploring nature, engaging in physical play, and following the group on excursions that encourage physical development and teamwork.
5. **Community Advocacy:**
 - Students will begin developing their voices as community advocates by expressing their ideas, making decisions that affect the class, and practicing fairness and empathy in social situations.

Kindergarten Readiness Focus

A significant component of the Preschool and Prekinder program is ensuring children are ready to transition to kindergarten, including:

- **Cognitive Skills:** Early literacy and numeracy skills, such as letter recognition, counting, and problem-solving.
- **Emotional Skills:** Developing emotional regulation, understanding feelings, and practicing self-control in group settings.
- **Social Skills:** Learning to work in teams, take turns, share, and resolve conflicts with minimal adult intervention.
- **Communication Skills:** Practicing speaking in front of groups, asking questions, and explaining ideas clearly to peers and teachers.

The structure of the daily routine helps children learn to manage transitions, follow multi-step directions, and adjust to the expectations they will face in kindergarten.

What Parents Need to Provide

Parents are to provide the following items to support their child's participation in the Preschool and Prekinder program:

- **Extra Clothing:** Teachers will keep extra clothing (including underwear and socks) provided by parents in the cubby in case of accidents or messy activities
- **Lightweight Blanket:** A small blanket that can fit into their cubby for rest time.
- **Appropriate Footwear:** Comfortable, closed-toed shoes for outdoor play and extended outdoor adventures.
- **Weather-Appropriate Gear:** To ensure children are comfortable during outdoor activities, they should wear a coat, hat, and mittens during colder weather, sunscreen, and a hat during warmer months.
- **Reusable Water Bottle:** A labeled water bottle to keep children hydrated during active play.

This Preschool and Prekindergarten program prepares children academically, socially, and emotionally, fostering independence, community awareness, and advocacy. As children prepare for kindergarten, they gain the skills and confidence needed for a smooth and successful transition to their next education stage.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

At La Escuelita, we believe that a strong sense of community is the foundation of a thriving educational environment. Our commitment to building meaningful relationships extends beyond the classroom to include families, staff, and the wider community. We create a supportive network where every child and family feel valued and connected by fostering collaboration, respect, and cultural understanding.

Families' Role in the Community

At La Escuelita, the family is the child's first and most significant teacher. We want to encourage a strong collaboration between what is taught at home and what we teach at school. Validation of home culture and language is essential to our curriculum development process. The traditions and interactions at home also significantly impact how we manage our child's behavior and address their learning style. We will strive towards the same goals with the same understanding to ensure each child's emotional well-being and academic success.

Families are involved in the La Escuelita community in various ways. Individual and group parent orientations, curriculum nights, and parent-teacher conferences are scheduled to ensure we agree regarding your child's care. Additional parent education opportunities are planned throughout the year, covering behavior management, literacy at home, nutrition, social services, etc.

We will ask you to bring various items representing your home culture to our classroom throughout the year. Families are welcome to volunteer at any time in the following ways:

- Cultural exchanges
- Recruitment and public relations
- Work on school fundraisers.
- Chaperone and drive on Field Trips.
- Help with special events at the school.
- Quality Improvement Committee
- Share talents and skills related to the curriculum or the center's needs.

Community Partnerships

Communal values are fundamental to the La Escuelita Family. We incorporate members of our extended family and community of musicians and artists. We have developed partnerships with community organizations, collaborated with them on special projects, and focused studies in the curriculum. Social justice plays an integral part in our curriculum. We organize with the children around issues that directly affect the community. We participate in food and clothing drives, immigrant rights marches, etc. We welcome any new organizational collaborations, social causes, or ideas around community action plans that may arise with the new families that join our program.

At the same time, we have remained steadfast in advocating for the professional growth of bilingual and bicultural educators, recognizing their critical role in shaping inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments. Through workshops, mentorship, and access to resources, we empower educators to thrive in their careers while ensuring that children benefit from enriched, culturally affirming early learning experiences. Together, these efforts reflect our commitment to fostering equity, opportunity, and excellence in childcare and education.

Here are some of the agencies, organizations, and individuals we have collaborated with:

The Latino Child Care Task Force
Seattle Central Community College
North Seattle Community College
Highline Community College
University of Washington
Child Care Resources
Teaching Umoja Project
Center for Linguistic & Cultural Democracy
City of Seattle Department of Education and Early Learning
Seattle Early Education Collaborative
Thrive by Five
Early Achievers
Seattle Theater Group
Seattle Public Library
Seattle Police Department
Seattle Fire Department
Seattle Children's Hospital
Seattle Public Schools
Department of Parks and Recreation
Grupo Bayano
Hijos de Agüeybana
SOAR
The Creative Curriculum
FLVR Entertainment
Elite Collective
Tribal Productions
Jazz Alley
Children's Alliance
Early Learning Action Alliance
Musica, ENT.
El Centro de la Raza
Jose Marti Child Development Center
Denise Louie Childcare Center
SeaMar Childcare Center
Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA)
Goddard College
Pacific Oaks College
Antioch University
Early Achievers
The Seattle Center
Alimentando el Pueblo
MAS - Movimiento Afro-Latino Seattle
206 Zulu Nation
Rock Steady Crew

Classroom Communication Forums

At La Escuelita, we encourage families to build meaningful connections inside and outside the school. These connections foster lasting friendships and create community among parents and children. Classroom communication platforms, including email databases, social media groups, and other online forums, are valuable tools for families to collaborate on projects, coordinate playdates, and enhance the classroom experience. However, to ensure these forums remain positive and productive, we ask parents to use them responsibly. All communication must align with La Escuelita's respect, confidentiality, and community values. Parents are reminded that:

- Social media platforms should not be used to share confidential information about children, families, or staff.
- Forums are not the place to air grievances, discuss personal matters, or spread rumors about the school, other families, or staff members.
- Unless you hear information directly from La Escuelita, it should be treated as a rumor and disregarded until the school verifies it.

Our policy is clear: *If concerns arise, please address them directly with the school using the grievance procedures outlined in this Program Handbook.*

Understanding Gossip and Its Harmful Effects

Gossip and spreading rumors are destructive and unacceptable behaviors undermining the trust, confidentiality, and harmony we work hard to cultivate in our school community. People engage in gossip for various reasons, including:

- A desire to feel superior.
- A need to belong or be included.
- To exert control or influence.
- Jealousy or revenge.

Regardless of intent, gossip's impact is universally damaging. It erodes trust, fosters negativity, and prevents collaboration toward shared goals. Parents are strongly discouraged from gossiping or spreading unverified information, whether online or in person.

Consequences for Misuse

La Escuelita reserves the right to terminate services if parents misuse communication forums to gossip, spread rumors, or disclose confidential information. We are committed to maintaining the integrity and safety of our classroom environment and expect all parents to uphold the same standards.

Building a Culture of Trust

We encourage parents to:

- Confirm any information with La Escuelita directly before sharing it.
- Use communication platforms to build friendships, celebrate milestones, and collaborate on initiatives that benefit the classroom.
- Speak positively and respectfully about all members of our school community.

We can create a nurturing and supportive environment for our children, families, and staff by working together and maintaining respect and professionalism in all communication.

What to Do If You Have Concerns

Please follow La Escuelita's [Grievance Procedure](#) to ensure that parental concerns are addressed respectfully and constructively.

Community Code of Conduct

At La Escuelita, we hold ourselves and our community to the highest respect, equity, and inclusion standards. We are committed to providing an environment where all individuals, regardless of race, gender, religion, or background, feel safe, valued, and respected. To uphold this commitment, we have a **zero-tolerance policy for racism, sexism, discrimination, or harassment**. Violations of this policy will result in immediate and appropriate action to protect the integrity and well-being of our community.

Family participation is essential to our beliefs and mission. Engaging in our community benefits us by allowing us to meet new parents, build friendships, and establish cooperative relationships with staff. Effective communication is key to maintaining harmony and ensuring the smooth operation of our school. This Code of Conduct was designed to promote accountability, respect, and mutual understanding among all community members.

Guiding Principles:

- Respect for self
- Respect for others
- Respect for the learning environment

General Guidelines:

1. **Safety:** Follow all policies and procedures outlined in the Program Handbook and associated policies. Please familiarize yourself with health, safety, and emergency protocols and act according to them.
2. **Ethical Conduct:** Always act in the best interests of children, their families, and community members. As a member of this community, recognize that each member has a unique contribution to make. We are all critical of the group and respect other community members.
3. **Support:** Work cooperatively and positively to support La Escuelita's mission. Offer services and abilities when they are helpful to the group. Commit to completing responsibilities you undertake and assist others when needed.
4. **Communication:** Use courteous and inclusive verbal and non-verbal communication. Profanity, harassment, or aggressive behavior will not be tolerated.
5. **Respect:** Honor the rights, beliefs, and practices of all individuals. Uphold La Escuelita's commitment to social justice, bilingual education, and anti-bias practices.
6. **Confidentiality:** Maintain confidentiality about all information concerning children, families, and staff. Refrain from sharing personal or sensitive information without consent. Comply with the center's policy on privacy.
7. **Children's Program:** When participating in the program, seek guidance and direction from the staff. If you need clarification on something, please ask for further information. The staff is responsible for the children's behavioral guidance. Any issues or concerns about managing children's behavior should be immediately referred to the administrative team.
8. **School Environment:** La Escuelita is a sacred space where children and teachers foster meaningful relationships and engage in continuous learning. As a visitor, it is essential to respect the classroom as the professional space of the teachers and adhere to the established rules when welcomed into this environment. While in La Escuelita facilities or attending events, the expectation is to be a positive role model and engage in appropriate and beneficial social interactions with your child, family members, other children, families, and all staff members.

Interactions with Children:

- Be a positive role model, always speaking and acting in a manner that fosters kindness and encouragement.
- Listen actively and provide empathy, support, and guidance when needed.
- Ensure that staff appropriately directs physical interactions with children other than your own, especially in safety situations.
- Respect classroom routines and behavioral guidelines
- A staff member should do things of a personal nature for a child other than your own, such as toileting and changing clothes.
- Adults are responsible for all children not enrolled who accompany them in the facility or attend events, ensuring they do not inhibit or disrupt the program in any way.
- Parents/Guardians will be responsible for their children’s behavior when attending after-school activities, including cleaning up after their children and leaving areas as they were found.

Interactions with Adults:

- Express ideas constructively, fostering a culture of collaboration and understanding.
- Avoid gossip, criticism, or sharing confidential information that undermines community trust or disrupts harmony.
- Be aware of how privilege may influence interactions and actively seek to create equitable relationships.
- Think before speaking and remember that what is evident to some may be invisible to others due to culture, language, and circumstance.
- Suspend judgment until facts are known and base decisions on objective information.
- Refrain from public criticism of the center’s children and adults. Under no circumstances should a child, parent, or staff member approach issues confrontationally. If you have a concern, follow the grievance procedures outlined in our Program Handbook.

Zero-Tolerance towards Discrimination

At La Escuelita, we are committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for all members of our community. While we respect everyone's freedom to hold their own political and moral beliefs, these beliefs must align with the values of respect, equity, and inclusion. **If we discover that any individual's beliefs or actions promote hate, discrimination, or harm toward others, that individual will no longer be welcomed in our school community.**

Instances of racism, sexism, or discriminatory behavior will be addressed immediately to ensure the safety and well-being of our students, staff, and families. Any concerns regarding violations of this policy should be reported to the administrative team, who will conduct a thorough investigation and take appropriate action to maintain the integrity of our community.

For further information on our stance toward discrimination, please see our *Non-Discrimination Policy*

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

Parent volunteers are an integral part of our school community. Volunteering is a meaningful way to support your child's education, connect with other families, and contribute to the nurturing and enriching environment we strive to provide. Whether assisting in the classroom, sharing your unique culture or skills, or supporting school operations, your time and effort make a significant difference in our children's lives. We welcome parents to actively participate in their child's learning journey and become part of the vibrant community at La Escuelita.

Steps to Become a Volunteer

We have a structured process for becoming a parent volunteer to ensure a smooth and safe experience. Please follow these steps:

1. **Complete Required Forms:**
 - Please complete the [Volunteer Form](#) and [Community Resource Inventory](#) and return them to the office.
2. **Follow the DCYF Volunteer Role Checklist:**
 - Create a *MERIT account* using the link provided in the checklist.
 - Complete the *Criminal Background Check* through MERIT.
 - When creating your MERIT profile:
 - Select *volunteer* as your role and list La Escuelita as your "employer."
 - Ensure that the correct center address is selected.
 - **Note:** Parent volunteers will be supervised with children, so the additional requirements in the final section of the checklist are optional.
3. **Schedule Volunteer Orientation:**
 - After completing the steps above, the office will contact you to schedule your volunteer orientation.
4. **Volunteer Placement:**
 - After orientation, the Program Director will assign volunteer opportunities based on the school's needs. These may include:
 - Reading stories to children in multiple classrooms.
 - Assisting as a crossing guard during drop-off or pick-up.
 - Helping teachers prepare classroom materials or activities.
 - Placement in your child's classroom is not guaranteed and depends on program needs and the type of activity.

DAILY OPERATIONS

The daily routines and procedures at La Escuelita are thoughtfully designed to create a smooth, safe, and engaging experience for children and families. This section provides an overview of key operational details, including drop-off and pick-up procedures, schedules, and other essential guidelines that help ensure our program runs efficiently. By understanding and following these procedures, families contribute to a welcoming, structured environment supporting every child's success.

Hours of Operation

- La Escuelita is open Monday through Friday from 6:30 am to 6:00 pm.
- Parents must complete the child's Daily Schedule Form and adhere to the selected schedule to ensure proper classroom staffing.
- After 6:05 p.m., late pick-up fees of \$5.00 per minute apply. Beyond 6:20 p.m., the emergency contact will be notified to collect the child. Late pick-up fees are included in monthly tuition invoices. If the emergency contact is unreachable, we will contact the proper authority to assist in reuniting the child with their parent or guardian.
- Per DCYF licensing guidelines, children should remain in care for no more than 10 hours daily. Exceeding this limit results in a \$50 daily fee per occurrence. Repeated violations may lead to childcare termination.
- A school calendar is provided during registration and re-enrollment in the spring.
- **Holiday Closures:** La Escuelita is closed on most major holidays, including Indigenous People's Day and Juneteenth.
- **Winter and Summer Break:** La Escuelita closes for two weeks in the winter and one week in the summer for staff vacations. These dates are included in the school calendar.
- **Professional Development Days:** La Escuelita is a teacher training institute that provides regular in-service training for our staff to ensure that they meet the high-quality standards we expect for the children. We close once per quarter for in-service training, and the dates are specified in the school calendar.
- **Modified Service Schedule:** Our modified service schedule is from **8:30am to 5pm**. This schedule is implemented not only during inclement weather but also in cases of staffing emergencies due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances. It allows us to adjust our hours of operation or service availability to ensure the safety and well-being of our staff and families while maintaining essential services whenever possible.

Emergency Closures

At La Escuelita, we fully commit to providing our clientele with daily services. Our employees are expected to report to work for their scheduled hours, except in the following extenuating circumstances:

Inclement Weather Conditions:

In the event of adverse weather conditions—such as significant snowfall, icy roads, or severe storms—we may either close our center or operate on a *Modified Service Schedule*. If Seattle Public Schools close due to these conditions, we will most likely adjust our hours of operation. Seattle Public Schools closures typically indicate widespread transportation issues across the district, making travel unsafe for both staff and families.

Due to the large size of the Seattle School District, our decisions will not be based solely on its status. We also take into account conditions in the school's surrounding neighborhood to determine whether to close or operate on a *modified service schedule*. Additionally, as the majority of our staff live in outlying areas, we will factor in the operational status of their respective school districts, which include:

- **Greenlake:** Edmonds, Everett, Seattle, Shoreline and Snohomish.
- **Columbia City:** Auburn, Federal Way, Highline, Kent, Marysville, Puyallup, Renton, Seattle, Shoreline and Tacoma.

If the majority of these school districts are closed, along with Seattle Public Schools, we will most likely close as well.

When operating on a Modified Service Schedule, our hours will be adjusted to **8:30 AM - 5:00 PM**. Parents will be notified of our operational status via Brightwheel Alert and email by 6:30 AM.

Please note that **school closures and/or modified service schedules may differ between campuses**, as these decisions are determined independently based on the specific conditions affecting each location.

Unforeseen Emergencies:

In case of a power or water outage at the school, we may have to close our facility. Unfortunately, we will be unable to provide services during this time. Parents will be contacted to pick up their children if this occurs during operating hours and services cannot be restored promptly.

Strike Closures

La Escuelita is a long-standing social justice agency advocating for the rights of Latino workers in the early childhood community. We may sometimes be called upon to support our teachers in political movements. In the event of a protest or strike that disrupts services, families will receive as much notice as possible. However, unanticipated strikes may result in closures without notice. We believe that standing in solidarity with our staff during these critical times reflects our core values of equity, justice, and community support. Employees are compensated for strike days.

Compensation and Refunds:

Employees will receive compensation for closures resulting from emergencies, and refunds will not be issued.

Daily Schedule

A consistent daily routine is vital for young children, providing a sense of security and predictability. Knowing what to expect daily helps children build confidence, develop self-regulation skills, and transition smoothly between activities. At La Escuelita, our daily schedule is thoughtfully designed to balance structured learning experiences, free play, and rest, supporting the developmental needs of every child.

Schedules vary between classrooms based on the age group and specific program goals. For example, infants may require more flexible schedules to accommodate feeding and nap times. At the same time, toddlers and preschoolers benefit from more structured routines, including learning activities, meals, and outdoor play. Each classroom tailors its schedule to meet the unique needs of the children while aligning with La Escuelita's overall philosophy and goals.

The schedule below serves as a general guide for the activities children are experiencing daily.

| Time | Activity |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 6:30 - 8:00 A.M. | Arrival and Health Check |
| 7:30 - 8:20 A.M. | Breakfast |
| 8:30 - 9:00 A.M. | Toileting |
| 9:00 - 12:00 Noon | Developmental Activities |
| 12:00 - 1:00 P.M. | Lunch |
| 1:00 - 2:30 P.M. | Nap |
| 3:00 - 3:15 P.M. | Snack |
| 3:15 - 4:30 P.M. | Developmental Activities |

Families will receive a detailed schedule specific to their child's classroom. Times may vary slightly based on each classroom's particular needs. Teachers will communicate any updates or changes to the schedule directly with families to ensure everyone is informed and prepared.

Drop-Off And Pick-Up Procedures

The drop-off and pick-up process is essential for building effective communication between school and home. These transition periods at the start and end of each day are vital for children to form bonds with their caregivers and reinforce behavioral expectations within the school environment. Please ensure you are familiar with our policies and procedures for a seamless and consistent experience.

Each classroom has a designated drop-off and pick-up time and location. Once your child's classroom has been assigned, you will receive detailed information about their classroom space and times. Drop-off and pick-up times are determined by the Daily Schedule form, which considers the average needs of parents within your class group.

Drop-off Procedures:

- **Routine Establishment**
Establishing a consistent daily routine helps your child transition smoothly from the security of being with you to the care of their teacher. Add 10-15 minutes to your morning routine to assist with this process.
- **Check-in via Brightwheel QR Code:**
We use a Brightwheel QR code for drop-off and pick-up. Ensure your mobile device is charged and ready to scan and sign the code. Wait to scan and sign until your child is out of your care.
- **Hand-Off to Teacher**
Please ensure you hand your child directly to their teacher or the designated staff member and say goodbye. If your child has trouble separating, the teacher will distract or redirect them. Prolonged issues with transitions may require a behavior management plan.
- **Consistent Timing**
It is essential to drop off your child at a consistent time. The school day begins at 9 a.m., and we are not a drop-in childcare center. Parents must call the office if children are dropped off later than 10 a.m., which allows the director enough time to inform classroom teachers and kitchen staff of any necessary adjustments to planned activities and meal service.
- **Safety and Supervision**
Parents must hold their children's hands and keep them close until they are in the teacher's care. Under no circumstances should children be left in the drop-off area without confirming that a teacher has received them.
- **Important Forms:**
Any necessary forms for the day, such as medication requests, must be completed and emailed to the office and classroom before arrival.

Pick-up Procedures:

- **Routine Establishment:**
As in the morning, establishing a consistent routine during pick-up is key to a smooth transition. Let your teacher know when you may need to adjust pick-up time. This allows time for the teacher to prepare your child for departure, making the process smoother for all.
- **Supervision:**
Once you sign your child out via Brightwheel, they are under your supervision, and their care is no longer counted in the student-teacher ratio.
- **Shared Outdoor Space:**
If your pick-up area is in the shared outdoor space, you are responsible for supervising your child and must leave the space within 10 minutes to allow preparation for the next group.
- **Late Pick-Up Policy:**
La Escuelita closes promptly at 6:00 PM. Children still in the facility after 6:05 PM will be in the closing classroom. Parents must come to the main office to pick them up and fill out a late pick-up form.

Drop-off and Pick-up Considerations:

- **Designated Times and Locations**
Parents are expected to drop off and pick up their children at the designated times and locations. If you miss your scheduled time, go to the main entrance and contact the office for assistance.
- **Social Etiquette and Safety**
Parents must model kindness, manners, and appropriate language in the designated areas. For safety reasons, please do not call out to your children or ask them to come to you at pick-up.
- **Minimal Conversation with Teachers**
Teachers must limit conversation during drop-off and pick-up to ensure a swift and safe transition. Important messages can be sent through Brightwheel or classroom email, or you can call the classroom directly.
- **Soiled Clothing**
Any soiled clothing will be sent home daily. Please return clean clothes the next day to ensure your child's cubby stays well stocked.
- **Classroom Changes and Staffing Needs**
Some classrooms may combine to meet ratio and staffing requirements. Children may be transported to the pick-up area with the closing classroom staff if necessary.
- **Classroom hours of operation:**
If parents need to drop off or pick up their child outside the classroom's scheduled hours of operation, they may receive care in an opening or closing classroom. Please inform the office if your child will need this accommodation.
- **Personal Items from Home**
All belongings, except lunch and replacement clothing, should be dropped off at the beginning of the week. Any toys brought from home will be stored in a designated basket and unavailable to the child during the day. The school is not responsible for lost items but does maintain a virtual lost-and-found to assist in locating misplaced items.
- **Release of Children**
Children will not be released to any parent or other individual who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. In such cases, an alternate listed on the registration form will be contacted to provide safe transportation for the child.

Facility Information

- Children are welcome in all parts of La Escuelita except for staff-only areas, food preparation areas, food storage areas, and janitorial storage areas.
- All main entrances have fire doors. For the safety of the children and the facility, fire doors must be closed when entering and exiting protected areas and not propped open.
- La Escuelita provides adult restrooms for visitors. Guests are expected to keep the restrooms clean and follow the posted guidelines.
- Children must always be supervised by their caretakers while in the La Escuelita facility.
- Children are not allowed to enter door codes or control elevators. This is for safety reasons and to prevent damage to the touch-sensitive control panels. Parents are liable for any damage their child causes while in their care.
- During daily care, elevators are used only to transport materials between floors; children are not transported using elevators.
- Children may visit the administrative office and staff areas under the supervision of a teacher or parent-guardian.
- Children may wait in the administrative office for special pick-up situations, such as illness exclusion or waiting to be picked up for appointments.
- Each facility has designated gross motor development areas for children to use daily, especially when they cannot go outside.

Parking:

- La Escuelita has parking areas for drop-off and pick-up at the center. These spaces are solely intended for quick drop-offs or pick-ups. The designated drop-off and pick-up hours are from 6:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Please follow the posted street signs if you need clarification on the parking regulations. La Escuelita will not reimburse parking tickets for non-compliance with parking rules.
- If you need to park at the center for over 15 minutes, please find an alternative location. Please refrain from parking your vehicle in the temporary load and unload zones throughout the day. We ask that you be considerate of our neighbors and not occupy their business parking spaces.

Car Seats and Strollers:

- Due to limited storage space for car seats and strollers at La Escuelita, parents are kindly requested to facilitate an exchange of car seats off-campus.
- Parents may contact the office in an emergency to make special arrangements for temporarily storing car seats or strollers for transportation purposes.
- Teachers cannot accept car seats or strollers during drop-off or pick-up times.
- Leaving strollers or car seats in the lobby or near emergency exits is strictly prohibited.
- Bike strollers can be secured to the bike rack in front of the building.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES

The health and safety of our children, families, and staff are our top priorities at La Escuelita. We are committed to creating a secure, nurturing environment where children can thrive physically, emotionally, and socially. Our health and safety policies are designed to prevent illness and injury, promote healthy habits, and ensure emergency preparedness.

This section overviews our key health and safety practices, including daily health checks, illness exclusion policies, hygiene protocols, emergency preparedness plans, and more. Families are encouraged to review this section thoroughly and familiarize themselves with our guidelines, as your cooperation is essential to maintaining the well-being of our entire community.

Daily Health Practices

To maintain a healthy and safe environment for all children, staff, and families, the following daily health practices are implemented in alignment with Washington State - Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), Department of Health (DOH), and King County Childcare Health Program (CCHP) standards and best practices:

Health Checks

- Staff conduct a daily health check of each child upon arrival to monitor for signs of illness or injury. Health checks include:
 - Observing symptoms of infectious diseases, such as fever (100.4°F or higher), vomiting, diarrhea, or respiratory issues.
 - Noting visible injuries such as bruises, welts, burns, or scratches.
- Parents must report any injuries that occur at home during drop-off. If unreported injuries are noticed, staff will document them in the classroom *Incident Injury Log* and provide an incident report to the parents. Under mandated reporting guidelines, frequent unreported injuries may be referred to Child Protective Services (CPS) without prior notice to the parent.
- Communicable illnesses will be reported to King County Public Health as required by WAC 246-110-010(3). The Health Department's recommendations will guide child exclusions and parental notifications.

Illness Exclusion

- Children presenting symptoms such as fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or other contagious conditions will be excluded from care as outlined in our *Illness Exclusion Policy*.
- A child may return to care only after meeting the conditions for return (e.g., symptom-free for 24 hours without medication or providing a doctor's note for diagnosed conditions).
- If an infectious illness is identified in the program, affected families will be notified to minimize the spread.

Hand Hygiene

- Handwashing is mandatory for everyone entering the classroom, including parents, staff, and children. Parents are encouraged to model this universal precaution by washing their hands often with their children at home or when visiting the classroom.
- Children and staff will wash their hands:
 - Upon arrival.
 - Before meals and after toileting or diaper changes
 - After handling body fluids, outdoor play, or sensory activities
- Hand sanitizers are provided but are not a substitute for proper handwashing when soap and water are available.

Toy and Equipment Sanitation

- Daily sanitation of toys: Infant and toddler toys are disinfected daily, and preschool and school-age toys are sanitized weekly or as necessary.
- Larger equipment and high-touch surfaces (e.g., door handles and tables) are disinfected weekly or more frequently during illness outbreaks.

Diapering and Toileting

- Diapering procedures follow the *3-step cleaning method* (clean, rinse, and disinfect). After each use, diapering areas are sanitized, and soiled items are sent home in sealed bags.
- Only staff members can use changing stations to change diapers while children are in the center. Parents are encouraged to use the designated diapering area in the bathrooms when visiting the center or attending after-hours events.
- The *Stand-up Diapering Method* is utilized for older children, ensuring appropriate hygiene while encouraging children to participate in the changing process. The floor area is disinfected after each change.

Linen and Mat Care

- Soiled linens are washed and sanitized weekly. Each child has an assigned mat cover, which is changed if it becomes soiled.

Environmental Cleaning

- Cleaning schedules align with health guidelines to maintain a sanitized facility:
 - **Floors and surfaces:** Solid surfaces are mopped, and carpets are vacuumed daily. Classroom Area Rugs are shampooed monthly or as needed. Carpets are shampooed biannually or as needed.
 - **Bathrooms:** Toilets and sinks are disinfected daily and after any visible contamination.
 - **Food areas:** Kitchen counters and food preparation surfaces are cleaned before and after use.
 - **Garbage disposal:** Trash cans are lined and emptied daily, with exterior surfaces cleaned to maintain hygiene.

Individual Health Care Plans

- Children with diagnosed health conditions (e.g., eczema, and IBS) must complete an *Individual Health Care Plan* detailing symptoms and care plans to prevent unnecessary exclusion. If any of these conditions apply to your child, the plan may include the following additional documents: a *Diabetes Care Plan*, a *Seizure Care Plan*, and an *Asthma Care Plan*.
- Staff will work with families to accommodate children's health needs while ensuring the safety of others in the group.

La Escuelita prioritizes the safety and well-being of all children, staff, and families. The following safety practices and emergency procedures are in place to ensure a secure and prepared environment:

Accidents and Medical Emergencies

- **Minor Injuries:**
 - Staff will treat minor injuries and document them in the *Childcare Illness Log* located in each classroom.
 - Parents will receive an *Incident Report Form* and notification in Brightwheel summarizing the incident and any actions taken. The Form must be signed by the parents and returned to the center.
- **Life-Threatening Emergencies or Severe Injuries:**
 - Staff will immediately call 911 and notify parents. A staff member will remain with the child until a parent or authorized emergency contact arrives.
 - In compliance with licensing regulations, staff trained in First Aid and CPR will manage all emergencies until professional medical help is available.
 - If necessary, the child will be transported via ambulance to:

Harborview Medical Center
325 9th Ave – Main Hospital, Seattle, WA 98104
(206) 526-2000
- **Non-Life-Threatening Injuries or Illnesses:**
 - Staff will provide first aid and notify parents promptly. Parents' instructions will guide further actions, including transportation or seeking medical care.
- **Reporting of Medical Aide:**
 - If a child encounters a health emergency or injury while under our supervision and needs medical attention, whether immediate or after-hours, we must report the event to DCYF and CPS. This ensures an investigation takes place and confirms that our emergency procedures and health and safety protocols are effectively implemented.

Emergency Evacuation Drills

- La Escuelita conducts monthly fire and earthquake drills to ensure preparedness.
- Drills are documented in the office, and evacuation plans are posted in all classrooms and common areas.
- Parents will receive a notification of our annual fire drill with the Seattle Fire Department.
- Parents are asked to provide emergency supplies for their children in case of a natural disaster requiring extended care.

Disaster Plan

- The *Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Plan* is accessible in the office, on Brightwheel, and in our virtual Policy Binder.
- In the event of a natural disaster:

The out-of-state contact is **Jose & Theresa Masso** at (714) 401-2824.

The emergency meeting location is:

Rainier Community Center
4600 38th Ave S., Seattle, WA 98118
(206) 386-1919

Parent Responsibilities During an Emergency:

1. **Do not call the center** to ensure phone lines remain open for emergency use.
2. Only come to the center if nearby and authorities confirm it is safe to travel. **Children will be released only at a designated emergency meeting location** to authorized family members or representatives.
3. Stay informed by monitoring emergency broadcasts via radio.
4. Rest assured that center staff will provide appropriate care and follow emergency instructions from local authorities.
5. Do not wander through evacuation sites. **Remain at the designated emergency meeting location and wait for staff to bring your child.**
6. Family members must provide identification and sign out the child at the dismissal area using a manual sign-out form.

Lockdown Emergency Procedures

In the event of a lockdown due to a safety threat, the following steps will be taken:

1. After being informed of a potential threat, the administrative staff will announce the lockdown.
2. Staff will secure all classrooms, hallways, restrooms, and offices.
3. Brightwheel will be checked to ensure all children are accounted for.
4. Parents will be informed of the situation via email and Brightwheel. **Parents are asked to refrain from calling the center** to ensure phone lines remain available for emergency use.
5. During the lockdown, no one will be allowed to enter or leave the building, and the key entry pads will be disabled.
6. Once authorities provide an "all clear," parents may pick up their children.

Emergency Preparedness Supplies

- La Escuelita maintains a stock of emergency supplies, including food, water, and first aid kits, sufficient for all children and staff for use during an extended emergency.
- Parents are required to contribute additional emergency supplies for their child, as specified in the **Emergency Comfort Kit**.

Emergency Comfort Kit

All classrooms will have an emergency kit stored in their classroom in case of a natural or man-made disaster. We will organize with parents for donations of water and non-perishable snacks for your classroom kit when the school year begins. We ask that parents please provide the following individualized items to be stored in a gallon-size Ziploc bag with your child's name on it. If you provided this kit the last school year, your child's classroom teachers will send it home for any updates you may want to make.

- A small book for reading with a Family Photograph taped to the inside.
- Comfort letter or card to help put your child at ease in case of an emergency. Comfort letter or card with tips for your teachers to help them put your child at ease in case of emergency.
- Index card: One side with emergency contacts – please include at least one out-of-state contact. Reverse side with a summary of your family's emergency plan.
- A small flashlight with batteries stored in a package – except for the infant age group.
- Small toy or entertainment for children (i.e., deck of cards, toy car, etc.)

Neighborhood Safety

Our center is in a rich, diverse urban environment. We have developed strong relationships with the community in which we live and a mutual respect for the urban culture that surrounds us. We have developed an understanding of the many problems this community deals with and the social-political nature of these problems. We develop policies and procedures to ensure the well-being and safety of the children when exploring the neighborhood. However, if we perceive a danger in the neighborhood that may threaten our children, we will inform parents and limit the outdoor excursions until we are satisfied that the area is safe. We have established a working relationship with the Fire Department and Police Department in our neighborhood to keep abreast of issues of concern that may impact our children. We also keep them informed of our concerns regarding their safety. For more detailed information, please refer to the: [Neighborhood Excursion Policy](#)

Comprehensive Policies – Overview

La Escuelita has several policies to ensure that all community members are well cared for while in our care. These policies cover many topics, from early learning health to emergency preparedness. We encourage you to take a moment to review these policies in detail; they are attached to the Program Handbook and are also available electronically via Brightwheel, in our digital Policy Binder, and can be emailed upon request:

Early Learning Health Policy. Our Early Learning Health policy outlines the comprehensive steps we take to ensure the health and well-being of our youngest learners. Developed in partnership with our King County Public Health Nurse and the Childcare Health Program, it provides clear guidelines on topics such as immunizations, nutrition, physical activity, and overall wellness.

Illness Exclusion Policy. Our Illness Exclusion Policy outlines the specific circumstances under which a child may be excluded from school due to illness, with the goal of preventing the spread of contagious diseases and protecting the health and well-being of all children and staff in our care. Our policy is informed by the guidelines provided by the King County Public Health Child Care Program, the Washington State Department of Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). However, we reserve the right to determine and implement what works best for our program to maintain a healthy and safe environment.

Medication Policy. Our Medication Policy details our procedures for handling prescription and over-the-counter medications, aimed at ensuring the safety and well-being of all children. It encompasses guidelines on when a parent or guardian and the child's doctor must sign a medication authorization form, as well as standards for securely storing medications and documenting their administration.

Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Plan. Our comprehensive Emergency Preparedness and Disaster plan details the steps we will take to ensure the safety and well-being of all children and staff in the event of an emergency or disaster. Developed with guidance from the Seattle Fire Department and the Seattle Police Neighborhood Safety Team and in alignment with state FEMA guidelines, the plan provides clear procedures for a range of potential scenarios. It includes detailed evacuation procedures, communication protocols to keep families informed, and guidelines for providing necessary medical care during emergencies.

Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure & Control Plan. Our Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure & Control Plan outlines the measures we take to prevent and manage exposure to bloodborne pathogens, ensuring the safety and health of all children, staff, and community members in our care. Developed in partnership with the Snohomish Health Department and in compliance with OSHA standards, the plan provides clear guidelines on minimizing risks. It includes protocols for the proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE), hand hygiene practices, and the safe handling and disposal of potentially hazardous waste.

Pesticide Policy. Our Pesticide Policy outlines the steps we will take to minimize the use of pesticides on our property. This policy is in place to protect the health of our children and staff. We do not regularly apply pesticides to our facilities. The policy outlines the types of pesticides used, how they would be used, and under what circumstances. Staff and families would be given 48 hours' written notice if the use of any pesticides was necessary.

Pet and Fish Policy. Our Pet and Fish policy describes the circumstances under which pets and fish are allowed on our property. This policy is in place to ensure the safety and well-being of all community members. We do not have pets on the premises. If a classroom were to adopt a pet, we would have a fish and pet policy available to guide its care. The guidelines outline the types of pets that would, by age, be appropriate and safe to have in the classrooms. It provides instructions for the care of pets and cleaning and hand-washing procedures when encountering pets. Parents would be advised in advance in writing if a school adopts a pet. Due to safety and allergy concerns, pets from home are only welcome in the facility with prior clearance from the office.

CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Our classroom practices create a positive, nurturing, and engaging environment where children feel safe to explore, learn, and grow. This section outlines the daily practices and guidelines that support the development of social-emotional skills, language acquisition, and cognitive growth in a structured yet flexible setting. Classroom practices include maintaining appropriate teacher-to-child ratios, implementing positive guidance techniques, and fostering collaboration among children, families, and teachers. Families will also find information on how to access classroom schedules, updates through Brightwheel, and how teachers ensure effective behavior management strategies.

Parent Information

The following information is in each classroom to meet licensing requirements. Many of these documents are also shared with parents via Brightwheel and in our digital Policy Binder:

- **Menu** for meals and snacks served at the school.
- The **Daily Class Schedule** detailing activities and routines for each day.
- The **Daily Lesson Plan** outlines the learning objectives and activities for the day.
- **Staff Names and Biographies**, providing information about the teachers and staff members working with the children.
- The **School Calendar** lists dates such as holidays, special events, and closures.
- **Emergency Numbers**, including contact information for local emergency services and key administrative staff.
- **Emergency Evacuation Procedures**, detailing steps to be taken in an emergency.
- **Medication Authorization Forms** are required for any child needing medication during school hours.
- The **School Policy Binder** includes all policies and procedures governing the school.
- The **Curriculum Binder** contains lesson plans and letters for the entire school year.

Parents are encouraged to review this information regularly to stay informed about classroom activities, school policies, and their child's progress. If they have any additional questions or access issues, please contact the administrative office.

Classroom Numbers and Staffing Ratios

- **Staff ratios:** La Escuelita provides staff based on the following required state licensing ratios:
 - One teacher: 4 children – 6 weeks to 11 months (Infant Program)
 - One teacher: 7 children – 12 months to 3 years (Waddler and Toddler program)
 - One teacher: 10 children – 3 to 6 years (Preschool and Prekinder program)
- La Escuelita assigns a third teacher to each classroom to ensure a higher quality of service. However, due to absences, other staffing needs, or program needs, we may move teachers.
- Classrooms maintain the ratio based on the birth date of the youngest child in the class. In the toddler program, the ratio changes when all children turn three years old.
- **Opening/Closing rooms:** To meet proper ratios and staff schedules, we have designated opening and closing classrooms to provide services before and after some classrooms become available. Children are dropped off in the opening classroom between 6:30 and 7:30 a.m.; they then make their way to their classrooms as their teachers arrive to pick them up. Starting at 4:30 p.m., children may divide into designated classrooms to meet afternoon ratios.
- **Summer Staffing:** Between June and August, many families phase-out of the program; new families may phase out in the latter part of August. During the summer, the staff schedules may change to meet the needs of the fewer children present.

Positive Guidance and Behavior Management

Positive guidance and behavior management are intended to help children learn fundamental human values, problem-solving skills, and responsibility for their actions. We also want children to be active participants in self-regulation of their behavior. These behavior management strategies are effective only when the children, parents, and staff buy into the process and are consistent.

By the law, our program philosophy, and policy, the following forms of discipline are strictly prohibited: hitting, spanking, shaking, scolding, shaming, time-out, isolating, labeling (e.g., "bad," "naughty," "whiny"), or any other hostile reactions to a child's behavior. All forms of corporal punishment are forbidden.

Staff will collaborate with the director to develop a behavior management plan if behavior concerns arise. This plan will outline the specific behavior that needs to be addressed, appropriate strategies for managing it, and how positive attention will be provided when the child demonstrates desired behaviors. We will also meet with parents to share the plan and seek their input. The center expects parents to communicate any additional information they receive regarding their child's behavior from referral agencies.

Occasionally, parents may have concerns about another student's behavior. These concerns should be brought to the director's attention and will be addressed with respect for the rights and confidentiality of all students and families. We discourage parents from discussing another child's behavior in front of their child, as this can influence how children interact with peers displaying challenging behaviors.

We believe in the principle that "it takes a village to raise a child" and are committed to ensuring that all children, regardless of behavior challenges, receive positive and appropriate attention from their peers and teachers as we work together on behavior management and natural consequences.

Please refer to our [Positive Guidance Policy](#) for more details on our approach.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

La Escuelita is required by Washington State Law and DCYF Licensing requirements to report immediately to the police or Child Protective Services any incident when there is a reason to suspect the occurrence of physical, sexual, or emotional child abuse or child neglect or exploitation. We may not be able to notify parents when the police or Child Protective Services are called about possible child abuse, neglect, or exploitation. This will depend on the recommendation of Child Protective Services. The CPS reporting guidelines are available for your review and are included in the digital Policy File.

The Outdoor Classroom

As a program, we prioritize daily outdoor play and exploration as essential to children’s health and development. Following the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) guidance for outdoor play for children from birth through five years old, we ensure children have ample opportunities to engage with nature and physical activity in various weather conditions. Our policies are designed to provide safe and enriching outdoor experiences while aligning with state guidelines and best practices.

Weather Preparedness

We ask families to provide appropriate gear for all seasons to support year-round outdoor play. This includes warm coats, hats, gloves, boots, and rain gear during the colder months, and lightweight clothing for hot weather. We also educate children and staff about the importance of dressing appropriately for comfort and safety outdoors.

Weather Exceptions

Outdoor time will be adjusted or canceled in cases of extreme weather. For example:

- If it is icy or there are high winds.
- During torrential rain that may present safety hazards.
- When air quality reaches an unhealthy level based on the Washington State Air Quality Index (AQI) for childcare. Outdoor activities will be restricted if the AQI exceeds 100 to protect children from potential health risks.

Daily Outdoor Schedule

Our outdoor time is planned in alignment with children's developmental needs. Below is a sample schedule for outdoor play:

| Age Group | Minimum Daily Outdoor Time | |
|---|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Infants (<u>Birth–12 mo.</u>) | 30 min. per day | Stroller Ride or Play Yard/Gym |
| Waddlers and Toddlers (<u>1–2 yrs</u>) | One Hour | Outdoor Play Yard/Gym and Walks |
| Preschool and Prekinder (<u>3–5 yrs</u>) | 90 min. – 2 hrs. | Outdoor Play Yard/Gym, Walks and Park |

Sun Safety

During warmer months, La Escuelita ensures children stay safe and comfortable during outdoor play by incorporating water activities like sprinklers and water tables to help them cool down. When temperatures exceed 90°F, outdoor time is limited, and shaded areas are prioritized for activities. Hydration is encouraged throughout the day. We use Rocky Mountain Sunscreen, applied with parental consent via a signed Bulk Sunscreen Authorization form. Parents may also provide their own sunscreen if preferred. These measures ensure children enjoy outdoor activities safely in the summer heat.

Nap And Resting Time Policy

At La Escuelita, we recognize the importance of rest and sleep for the healthy development and well-being of all children. Our classrooms are designed to provide a calm and comfortable environment where children can rest, or nap as needed. Nap and resting time are scheduled daily and follow best practices to ensure children feel secure, relaxed, and supported.

During rest time, all children under the age of five are provided with a quiet period and appropriate accommodations, such as individual mats, blankets, and sheets. Teachers encourage self-regulation by allowing children to set up their rest area and participate in wake-up routines. Children who do not nap are offered quiet, engaging activities as an alternative.

Staff follow strict safety protocols, including constant supervision, proper ventilation, and adherence to safe sleep practices. Parents are encouraged to communicate their child's individual rest needs, and routine adjustments are made collaboratively to support both the child and the family.

Please refer to our *Nap and Resting Time Policy*, which is available upon request, for detailed information on rest schedules, safe sleep practices, and nap time alternatives.

Brightwheel

La Escuelita uses the Brightwheel platform to streamline communication and keep parents informed about their child's day. Through Brightwheel, we track daily attendance, toileting, nap times, meals, and other basic functions. Teachers also use Brightwheel to share updates, photos, and insights into the child's activities and learning experiences, fostering a strong connection between the classroom and home. To access this information, each parent or guardian needs to download the Brightwheel app on their mobile device. Alternatively, printed copies of the information can be provided upon request.

Show and Tell

Show-and-tell is a wonderful social-emotional development activity that also promotes children's language development. It allows children to bring special items from home to share with their friends. We would appreciate it if children brought items relevant to the theme they are focusing on for the month.

Depending on their classroom's routine, children aged 3 years and older may participate in Show and Tell on their assigned day of the week. This valuable activity supports social-emotional development and enhances language skills by allowing children to share unique items with their peers.

- Children are encouraged to bring items from home that are meaningful and relevant to the classroom theme for the month.
- Please check with your child's teaching team for the current theme and their assigned Show and Tell day.

Once a month, families are invited into the classroom to participate in a **Family show-and-tell** activity. This theme-based event allows families to share their culture, traditions, hobbies, or interests with the class and actively engage in their child's learning experience. Family Show and Tell dates are listed on the classroom calendar, so check for your family's assigned date.

Toys from Home

We provide sufficient materials in our center that are age-appropriate and bias-free, fostering positive social interaction and self-image. We appreciate children keeping their toys at home. It's difficult for children to share their special treasures with many friends. Toys brought from home will be placed in a Toy Basket that is not accessible to children and will be available for parents to take home at pick up. Toys that promote gender stereotypes, racial stereotypes, or violence will not be welcomed in the classroom Toy Basket will be placed in the office to be sent home.

Birthday Celebrations

Families are welcome to celebrate their child's birthday in the classroom by completing a *Classroom Celebration Form*, available in the office. If bringing food, only store-bought items with clear labeling on the package are allowed. Alternatively, cooking activities can be done in the classroom using fresh and unopened ingredients. Sugary items like cake, ice cream, and candy should be limited, and the director will review and approve requests. Provide at least one week's notice for celebrations and sign in at the office on the event day. Balloons are prohibited for safety reasons. Piñatas are allowed outdoors only and must be filled with safe, non-toxic, age-appropriate items. Coordinate outdoor schedules with your child's teacher.

Holiday Celebrations

La Escuelita uses a culturally relevant anti-bias curriculum, meaning we inclusively look at holiday celebrations. We honor families' traditions in our program and, more specifically, children in the classroom. This means that our approach varies from year to year, depending on the cultural makeup of each classroom. Classroom teachers and admin staff will decide how to approach each holiday depending on the classroom demographics. Parents are welcome to share their traditions with the class throughout the year. However, we ask that parents refrain from planning classroom celebrations without the classroom teachers' invitation and the administrative staff's consent.

Religious Activity

The curriculum at La Escuelita does not include any specific religious instruction. However, in honor of our program's many cultures and beliefs, the teachers may choose to include traditions and celebrations that hold essential cultural or symbolic significance to them or the children and families of the classroom. We have various cultural events throughout the year that may include material related to our curriculum themes. This may also reflect the traditional practices of the cultures represented in our center. Some of those traditions and practices may be derivative of a religious practice. Our Preschool and Prekinder children study various biographies of community leaders with different religious backgrounds that influenced their work as community social justice leaders.

Classroom Donations

We welcome donations from our families with open arms and have an ongoing wish list that parents may refer to when looking for donated materials. We ask that all donations be brought to the office so that the administrative staff can check the material for age appropriateness and safety before introducing the material to the classroom. We ask that the materials being donated be in working condition and clean. We welcome children to bring age-appropriate media and books to share with their classroom. We have a non-violence and anti-bias policy in our center; we will not allow materials in our center that foster aggressive behavior or promote stereotypes.

MEAL SERVICE

La Escuelita’s meal services are thoughtfully planned to support children’s physical growth and overall well-being while accommodating dietary needs and allergies. This section provides an overview of the meal policies, including breakfast, lunch, and snack schedules. Families will also find guidelines on packing box lunches, our strict **Tree Nut Policy**, and how we handle food-related allergies and restrictions.

La Escuelita Menu and Meal Service

- La Escuelita provides all children with breakfast and two nutritious snacks in the mornings and afternoons. However, it reserves the right to serve portions based on the cultural norms of our staff and the nutritional needs of our children. We serve hormone-free whole and 2% milk with breakfast and lunch. Water is served at every meal. La Escuelita does not serve juice, pork, or tree nut products.
- Children can eat off the La Escuelita menu once they reach 12 months of age.
- La Escuelita’s Breakfast and Snack menu is developed in conjunction with the Department of Public Health School Nutrition program standards. The school nutritionist approves our nutritional standards menu every year. We have a two-week food purchasing cycle, and we serve fresh food and produce towards the beginning of the two weeks, as well as shelf-stable and frozen food towards the end of the purchase cycle.

Sample menu:

A.M.

Blueberry Muffins
 Cheese Cubes
 Applesauce
 Milk or water

P.M.

Graham Crackers
 Snap peas
 Peach slices
 Milk or water

- Children eat breakfast between 7:30 and 8:30 am. La Escuelita stops serving school breakfast at 8:20 am and allows 10 minutes for children that arrive at that time to finish eating. By 8:30 am, breakfast service is completed, and children move on to different activities or their assigned classroom. If your child will arrive after 8:20 am, please ensure they have eaten breakfast before arriving. If they have not eaten breakfast, parents are welcome to send their children with breakfast from home.
- All meals provided by La Escuelita are served family-style. Children participate by serving their own portions. All food is served at the same time, with no preference given to any food group. The goal is to help children develop independent eating skills and regulate hunger.
- All perishable food is stored in the classroom refrigerator and labeled with the child’s name and date. At the end of the day, food and bottles bought from home must be taken home.
- The snack menu is shared with parents via the Brightwheel app and posted daily in each classroom near the food service area. Teachers highlight the meals children eat daily to keep parents informed of their child’s food intake.
- Suppose a child cannot eat something from the posted menu due to allergies, dietary restrictions, or personal preferences. In that case, parents must provide an alternative lunch or snack that adheres to the school's policies, including the nut-free policy.
- For guidance on packed meals, please refer to our **Box Lunch Requirements**, which outline the components of a balanced, nutritious meal for children.

Tree Nut Policy

La Escuelita enforces a **strict no-tree-nut policy** to protect children with severe allergies. This includes:

- No tree nuts or tree nut products (e.g., almonds, cashews, walnuts, hazelnuts) are allowed in lunches, snacks, or any items brought into the facility.
- Staff carefully review ingredient labels for tree nut content when preparing food.
- Parents must ensure that all food brought to the facility is tree-nut-free. Non-compliant food will be removed and returned to the parent.
- Staff are trained to recognize symptoms of an allergic reaction and respond promptly using the child's Allergy Care Plan, including administering epinephrine if prescribed.

Box Lunch Requirements

Please adhere to the following requirements mandated by licensing and La Escuelita. We ask that you provide food that meets nutritional standards. Soda pop and junk food will be returned home.

- 1) Provide your child with a lunch box labeled with their name.
- 2) Provide a nutritious lunch and provide variety.
- 3) Please omit candy, chips, soda, or other junk food.
- 4) WE ARE A TREE NUT-FREE SCHOOL. Our school has children with severe, life-threatening peanut allergies. If you are using a peanut substitute, please label your lunch.
- 5) Please make sure all items in the lunch box are ready to eat. Foods that need to be heated must be served in a thermos or sent in a microwave container labeled with the child's name and heating time. Please cut up fruit and vegetables and make sure they are the appropriate size for the child's age.
- 6) Lunch boxes need to be taken home to be cleaned and sanitized daily.

Catered Lunch:

Parents have the option to buy a catered hot lunch or bring lunch from home. We are in the process of selecting a hot lunch vendor, so please stay tuned for updates.

Food Allergies

La Escuelita prioritizes the safety and well-being of all children, especially those with food allergies. Children cannot begin care with us without a completed *Food Allergy Health Care Plan*. Parents are responsible for notifying us of their child's allergies and obtaining a physician's note detailing the allergy, along with a substitute item of equal nutritional value per USDA guidelines. Parents should complete and return the plan provided by the center.

Medication or care plans must be updated yearly, and parents are responsible for providing thorough instructions to teachers on how to administer medication. State guidelines require that staff training on medication administration be documented with the signatures of both the parent who gave the training and the staff member who received it.

The names of children and their specific food allergies are confidentially posted in food service areas and classrooms for staff reference. Parents must supply all necessary substitutions (e.g., non-dairy beverages or allergen-free alternatives) and ensure these items are provided in unopened packages with clear labeling.

We also require parents to provide detailed emergency action plans for severe allergies, including the use of epinephrine or other critical medications. Parents are responsible for ensuring medications are current and providing replacement supplies before expiration dates.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

As your child will spend significant time at La Escuelita, parents must be well-informed about the school's policies, procedures, and protocols that ensure its smooth operation. Adhering to these guidelines outlined in this Program Handbook is essential for school community members to foster a long-lasting and productive partnership with you.

Waiting List and Admission Procedures

La Escuelita maintains a waiting list for families interested in joining the program throughout the school year. As spots become available, we notify families on the list and provide them with enrollment opportunities. Due to the extensive waiting list, openings may arise occasionally during the school year. However, most new students typically enroll in September for the upcoming school year. Please refer to our [Waitlist and Enrollment Policy](#) for further information regarding our waitlist process. Additionally, for any inquiries or to add a sibling to the waitlist, please contact our Enrollment Director, Laura Hernández Agustín, at enrollment@laescuelitaschools.com.

Transition Policy

Throughout the year, we aim to provide a seamless and developmentally appropriate transition process for all children as they progress through our program.

Annual Transitions:

Most children transition to new classrooms during the summer, coinciding with the graduation of PreKinder students. By May, we will confirm re-enrollment and begin assigning children to their next classroom group. Families are notified of their child's new classroom placement, and preparations are made for a smooth transition.

Mid-Year Transitions:

Throughout the year, as spaces become available, we prioritize children within the program who may have outgrown their current classroom or require a change in their peer group. Teachers and the Program Director identify candidates for these openings, and the spaces are offered to families of eligible children. This process continues from the oldest classroom group down to the youngest until all available spaces are filled. If current children do not require a transition due to age, developmental readiness, or other factors, any remaining spaces are offered to families on our waiting list.

Peer Groups

We prioritize transitions based on age first, followed by consideration of class groups and relationships with peers. While we strive to maintain peer groups whenever possible, this may not always be feasible due to classroom needs and space availability. We encourage families to foster friendships and connections outside of the classroom setting. This helps children adapt to changes in their social groups and builds their understanding that group placements cannot always be controlled. Such transitions offer valuable opportunities for children to learn how to form new relationships and thrive in diverse peer groups.

Supporting Transitions:

Our approach ensures that transitions are tailored to each child's developmental and emotional needs, fostering confidence and continuity in their educational journey. Families are encouraged to participate in pre-transition activities, such as classroom visits, to help their children adjust to the new environment.

Accounting Policies

La Escuelita is committed to maintaining clear and transparent financial policies to ensure a smooth experience for all families. Key highlights of our accounting practices include:

- **Billing Platform:** Tuition and fees are managed through Kinside, an easy-to-use online platform where parents can view invoices, make payments, and track their accounts.
- **Tuition Payments:** Tuition is due on the 25th of each month for the following month. Late payments will incur fees.
- **Additional Fees:** Registration fees, late pick-up fees, and other potential charges (e.g., extended care or special activities) are outlined in our full policy.
- **Sibling Discounts & Payment Arrangements:** We offer discounts for families with multiple children enrolled and are happy to discuss payment arrangements if needed.
- **Subsidized Childcare:** We work with several local programs to provide subsidized childcare for eligible families.

For full details on our financial policies, including tuition credits, fee schedules, late payment penalties, and subsidized care requirements, please refer to our [Accounting Policy](#) or contact Ray Sosa at info@laescuelitaschools.com for assistance.

Confidentiality Policy

All information on children registered at La Escuelita is considered confidential information. Confidentiality is the key to developing trusting relationships. At La Escuelita, staff and parents must exercise confidentiality regarding children, families, and staff. Sharing information entrusted to us without consent is a fundamental breach of trust, and once it is broken, it is not easy to rebuild.

All information shared with employees will remain confidential during and after administrative and classroom employee's resignation or termination. This confidential information includes:

- Personal information of students of La Escuelita, including student's evaluation
- Personal information of clients of La Escuelita
- Personal information and disciplinary record of employees of La Escuelita
- Administrative information or business practices

Only pertinent information will be shared with agencies such as the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), King County Public Health Comprehensive Childcare Health Program (CCHP), the City of Seattle's Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL), and Child Protective Services (CPS) as part of their monitoring process.

Family Dynamics Policy

At La Escuelita, family dynamics can vary greatly, including circumstances involving separation, divorce, new partners, and co-parenting between two separate households. We recognize that family dynamics, including divorce or separation, can significantly impact a child's emotional and mental health.

We prioritize the child above all else and will not tolerate behaviors that place them in the middle of parental conflicts. Using a child as a tool in disputes related to divorce or separation is harmful and contrary to their best interests. La Escuelita will not engage in or support any actions that contribute to this kind of damaging behavior. Additionally, we expect all interactions within our community to remain respectful. Slander or negative comments about either parent will not be accepted, as we believe both parents play an essential role in a child's life when the child is accustomed to having them involved.

We understand that divorce or separation can be a deeply challenging and traumatic experience for a child. We ask that parents openly communicate with us when their family is navigating these circumstances, so we can provide appropriate support and ensure the child feels safe, secure, and cared for during this transition.

Our goal is to foster a positive, child-centered approach. In this approach, the needs of the child come first, and their well-being is always upheld. To this end, the following guidelines ensure confidentiality and professionalism when navigating these situations:

Neutrality and Equal Access

- La Escuelita remains neutral in all family matters, avoiding favoritism or bias toward any parent, guardian, or household.
- Both parents or guardians are entitled to equal access to information about their child unless legal documentation (e.g., court orders and parenting plans) explicitly restricts access.

Parenting Plans

- Parents or guardians are required to share legal parenting plans or custody agreements with the school to ensure we adhere to the court's directives.
- Parenting plans will be kept confidential and accessible only to necessary administrative staff. The information in these plans will guide communication and decision-making regarding the child.

Separate Communication

- For families with dual households, La Escuelita will provide separate and equal communication to both parents and guardians, including:
 - Copies of progress reports, newsletters, and other updates.
 - Notifications about school events, schedules, or emergencies.
 - Incident reports or concerns about the child's behavior or well-being.
- Communication with each parent will remain confidential and not be disclosed to the other parent unless legally required.

New Partners and Family Members

- Information shared by one parent about new partners, family members, or household changes will remain confidential unless it pertains to the child's safety or well-being.
- La Escuelita will only share such information with the other parent when legally required or if it directly impacts the child's care or safety.

Confidentiality and Safety of the Child

- Our primary responsibility is the safety and well-being of the child. Any disclosures or observations that raise concerns about a child’s welfare will be reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) or other relevant agencies in compliance with mandated reporting laws.
- Staff members are prohibited from taking sides in disputes between parents or guardians. Any concerns about the child’s care, behavior, or progress will be communicated objectively and professionally.

Conflict Resolution

- Parents and guardians are encouraged to resolve disputes outside of the school environment. Confrontations or inappropriate behavior on school grounds will not be tolerated and may result in restricted access to the facility.
- Concerns or grievances should be adequately addressed as outlined in the Program Handbook.

Confidentiality After Separation

- All communications and records about the child’s development, health, and behavior will remain confidential and shared only with authorized individuals, including parents/guardians, unless restricted by legal documentation.

Legal Requests and Documentation

- In the event of subpoenas, court orders, or requests for records, La Escuelita will comply with legal obligations while maintaining the highest level of confidentiality possible.
- Parents or guardians must notify the school immediately of any changes to legal custody, parenting plans, or other relevant arrangements.

Restraining Order Policy

Sometimes, families undergo significant changes and must make decisions based on their family’s safety needs. If your family finds itself in a position where a restraining order is filed against someone who has access to your child, please present a copy of your restraining order to the office and a picture of the individual prohibited from contacting your child. We will abide by the guidelines once a legal restraining order is presented to La Escuelita. If the situation changes, we will require a letter from the court legally revoking the specifications of the restraining order. Until then, the person in the restraining order will not be permitted on the premises regardless of the current state of their relationship with the child registered. We understand that all families have times when they may enter conflict. However, we are responsible for ensuring your child has a worry and conflict-free place where the issues they may face at home will not interfere with their growth and learning at school. We are also responsible for ensuring the safety of other children who are registered in our care and our staff members.

Secured Building Policy

La Escuelita is committed to maintaining a safe and secure environment for all children, staff, and families. To uphold this commitment, we have implemented strict building access protocols to prevent unauthorized entry and ensure the safety of everyone on our premises.

Building Access

- Parents and guardians do not have free access to the facility. Entry is only permitted by prior appointment and authorization from the administrative team.
- All families must check in and out at the main office upon arrival and departure. This policy ensures accurate records of who is always present in the facility.
- Employees are the only individuals granted unrestricted access to the facility, and that is only during business hours.

Visitor Protocol

- All visitors, including parents without an appointment, must ring the doorbell and wait for a staff member to authorize entry.
- Upon entry, visitors must sign in at the office and wear a visitor badge.

Safety Measures

- The building has security cameras in classrooms, hallways, entry points, and outdoor/indoor play areas to monitor activity and ensure a safe environment.
- Entry doors to areas where children are present are secured with a key code system accessible only to authorized staff.

Preventing Unauthorized Entry

- Parents, guardians, and visitors must never allow unauthorized individuals to enter the facility. This includes holding doors open for others, permitting entry to unknown individuals, or bypassing the check-in process.
- Families are expected to redirect unauthorized individuals attempting to enter the primary office.

Addressing Security Incidents

- Due to past incidents involving unauthorized individuals gaining access, including cases related to domestic disputes, restraining orders, and parenting plans, La Escuelita has implemented these stricter protocols to ensure the safety of all.
- Any violation of these policies may result in the termination of care for the families involved.

Parent and Guardian Cooperation

- Parents and guardians must comply with these security protocols and ensure their actions prioritize the community's safety.
- The administrative team must be informed immediately of any security concerns or suspicious activity.

Classroom Video Surveillance Policy

At La Escuelita, classroom video surveillance supports the safety and well-being of children and staff. Cameras are installed to provide real-time supervision, maintain a secure learning environment, and investigate concerns or incidents as they arise. The following policy outlines the use, access, and confidentiality of video surveillance footage:

Purpose of Video Surveillance

- Classroom video footage is strictly used for supervision and to investigate incidents or issues of concern.
- Surveillance helps ensure transparency, accountability, and a safe environment for children, families, and staff.

Access to Video Footage

1. Administrative Oversight:
 - Only authorized administrative staff have direct access to video footage.
2. Requests to View Footage:
 - Parents may request to view footage if they provide a valid reason (e.g., to address a safety concern or investigate an incident).
 - Such requests will be reviewed and approved by administrative staff.
3. Consent for Viewing:
 - Footage will only be shared with parties directly involved in the incident after all parties have written permission.
 - Parents or guardians may view the footage in person under the supervision of administrative staff.
4. Strict Confidentiality:
 - To protect the privacy and security of all children and staff, videos will not be shared via email, downloaded, or distributed in any other form.

Viewing Guidelines

- Parents viewing videos must do so on-site in the presence of administrative staff.
- Footage may not be photographed, recorded, or shared by any unauthorized individual.

Retention of Footage

- Video footage is retained for a limited period, typically 30 days, unless needed for an ongoing investigation or review.

Confidentiality and Privacy

- The privacy of all children, families, and staff captured in the footage is paramount.
- Footage will only be used for supervision or to resolve concerns directly related to the classroom environment.

Media Release Policy

At La Escuelita, we prioritize the privacy and security of our children and families while recognizing the importance of sharing meaningful moments with parents and the broader community. This policy outlines our program's guidelines for using photos, videos, and observations.

Observations by Agencies and Educational Institutions

- Educational institutions, childcare licensing agencies, or other professional organizations may occasionally visit La Escuelita to conduct observations or assessments as part of their programs or initiatives.
- These observations are strictly for educational or professional purposes and do not involve recording or photographing children unless prior consent has been obtained.

Photos and Videos Taken by La Escuelita Staff

- Photos and videos captured by La Escuelita staff are primarily used to:
 - Share updates with parents through the Brightwheel app, giving families a glimpse of their child's daily activities.
 - Document classroom projects, milestones, and special events.
- These images and videos are securely shared exclusively with parents of the children involved and are not distributed beyond Brightwheel without prior notification and consent.

Promotional Use

- Occasionally, La Escuelita may use photos or videos of children for marketing or promotional materials, such as brochures, social media posts, or the school's website.
- Parents will be notified if their child's image or likeness is considered for promotional purposes, and written consent will be obtained before use.

Parental Notification and Consent

- Parents are required to sign a Media Release Form at the time of enrollment, indicating whether they consent to their child being photographed or filmed for:
 - Classroom documentation.
 - Parent updates via Brightwheel.
 - Potential promotional materials.
- Parents will be informed in advance and asked for additional written consent for any circumstances not covered in the original Media Release Form.

Opting Out

- Parents who prefer their child not to be photographed or recorded can indicate this preference on the Media Release Form.
- La Escuelita will respect this decision and ensure their child is excluded from any photos, videos, or recordings to the extent possible.

Confidentiality

- All photos and videos remain the property of La Escuelita and are handled with strict confidentiality.
- Photos and videos will not be shared with third parties, downloaded, or distributed outside of the circumstances outlined in this policy.

Field Trip Policy

Field trips are an integral part of La Escuelita's educational program. They provide children enriching opportunities to explore their surroundings and connect classroom learning with real-world experiences. Whether tied to the monthly learning theme or designed as special events, these outings are thoughtfully planned to enhance your child's educational journey. We follow detailed policies and procedures to ensure every trip is safe and successful.

Please refer to our Field Trip Policy document, available upon request, for a comprehensive overview of the field trip guidelines, including preparation, safety protocols, and transportation policies.

Transportation Policy

La Escuelita prioritizes the safety and well-being of children during transportation. Parents are responsible for providing daily transportation to and from the center. For field trips or emergencies, La Escuelita may provide transportation using chartered buses, staff vehicles, or parent volunteer vehicles that meet strict safety requirements.

All vehicles used for transportation must have seat belts and child safety seats. Drivers must have a valid driver's license and liability insurance and adhere to safety regulations. During transportation, appropriate staff-to-child ratios will be maintained, and at least one adult present will have current First Aid and CPR certification.

For more detailed guidelines, including driver requirements, emergency protocols, and safety standards, please refer to the **Transportation Policy**, available upon request.

Conflict of Interest Policy

La Escuelita Bilingual School is committed to maintaining the highest standards of professionalism and integrity in all interactions between staff, clients, and families. The following policies have been established to uphold these standards and protect the school from potential conflicts of interest or legal liabilities. Violations of these policies may result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment or a client's enrollment.

1. Employee-Client Personal Relationships

- La Escuelita strictly prohibits employees from engaging in romantic, intimate, or close personal relationships with clients or their family members while the client's children are enrolled in the program. This policy is designed to maintain professional boundaries, avoid favoritism, and prevent actual or perceived conflicts of interest.
- Employees or clients may pursue such relationships only after the cessation of services to the client or after the employee's termination or resignation from La Escuelita.
- Failure to disclose such a relationship may result in immediate termination of employment and the client's enrollment.

2. Employee-Client Business Relationships

- Employees are prohibited from entering business relationships with clients outside of the school environment. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Providing childcare services to the client's children outside of school hours.
 - Entering contracted or paid positions (e.g., nannying, tutoring, or housework) with clients or their families.
- Employees found to violate this policy may face disciplinary action, including immediate termination. Similarly, clients found engaging in such arrangements may risk the termination of their child's enrollment at La Escuelita.
- Employees are also prohibited from transporting clients' children outside of the school environment unless they have a direct familial relationship with the client. This measure safeguards the safety and well-being of the children in our care.

3. Post-Employment and Solicitation Restrictions

- To protect the integrity of our relationships with clients and prevent undue influence, La Escuelita prohibits former employees from soliciting or providing care to La Escuelita clients for six (6) months following the termination or resignation of their employment with the school. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Nannying, babysitting, or providing any form of paid or unpaid childcare services.
 - Offering or providing educational or tutoring services to a client's child(ren).
- Any former employee who violates this policy may be sued for breach of contract or non-compete agreements, if applicable.
- Clients who engage a former employee for such services within the restricted period may also risk termination of their child's enrollment at La Escuelita, as this creates a direct conflict of interest with our school's mission and policies.

4. Gossip, Rumors, and Confidentiality

- La Escuelita enforces a zero-tolerance policy for gossip and rumors that harm professional relationships or the school's reputation. Employees must maintain confidentiality and avoid discussing private information about clients, coworkers, or school matters outside of work contexts.
- Clients are similarly expected to respect the privacy and professionalism of the school and its staff. Following our grievance policy, complaints or concerns should be addressed directly with the administrative team.

Legal Compliance

This policy complies with applicable Washington State labor laws and best practices. During their onboarding process, all employees must review and acknowledge it. La Escuelita reserves the right to amend or revise this policy to comply with evolving legal standards and organizational needs.

Grievance Procedures

We consider parents the first teachers of their children. We aim to establish a cooperative relationship with parents, which will, in turn, assist us in providing quality programming that is developmentally age-appropriate and linguistically and culturally relevant. We hope teachers and parents develop a relationship of mutual respect that will allow them to resolve issues of concern continuously. However, problems involving health, safety, and behavior management need to be brought to the attention of the administrative team.

Please follow these guidelines if you have an issue of concern that you would like investigated:

1. Document your concerns by emailing your center Director, Chavely Cherena, (chavely@laescuelitaschools.com)
2. C.C. MariSol Masso Lincoln, CEO/Education Director (marisol@laescuelitaschools.com). This will inform the business owners of your concerns.
3. The director will respond within 24 hours with a correction plan or inform parents that further time is needed to meet with personnel and strategize how the concern will be addressed.
4. If necessary, a meeting with the parents will be scheduled to address their concerns, present solutions, and obtain further feedback.

The administrative team will try to accommodate and compromise within the licensing guidelines, school philosophy, and operating budget.

Termination of Care Policy

In exceptional circumstances, La Escuelita reserves the right to deny services to a child. This decision is made after carefully considering the child's best interests and the school's ability to provide appropriate support. The school will always prioritize the well-being and safety of all children.

La Escuelita will work with the parents to find a suitable alternative placement when a child is denied services. The school will provide the parents with a written notice of the reasons for the denial and a list of resources that may be helpful. In some cases, La Escuelita may schedule a meeting with the parents to discuss the child's last day of attendance. This meeting will allow the parents to ask questions and receive more information about the school's decision.

Some reasons for expulsion may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The child may require specialized behavioral services that La Escuelita cannot provide adequately. These services may include individual therapy that requires a smaller group setting or the attention of licensed behavioral or physical development specialists.

We also reserve the right to refuse service for the following reasons:

- Parents repeatedly violate school policies or procedures. This may include failing to pick up the child on time, not providing necessary paperwork, or disregarding school rules.
- Parents who communicate disrespectfully or physically attack staff or create a hostile and unsafe environment for everyone at the school.

At La Escuelita, we acknowledge that withholding services from a child is a difficult choice, primarily if it is due to parental conduct. In such situations, we prioritize safeguarding the child's well-being and making decisions in their best interests. Our objective is to terminate our relationship with the client in a manner that minimizes potential disruption and emotional distress.

Intellectual Property Policy

Intellectual property rights are taken very seriously at La Escuelita. This means that all intellectual materials, including the curriculum, evaluation documents, and information shared with parents, are the exclusive property of La Escuelita.

The curriculum at La Escuelita is carefully developed by experienced educators and designed to provide students with a high-quality education. Evaluation documents assess students' progress and ensure they meet their academic goals. The information shared with parents is intended to inform them about their child's education and allow them to be involved in their child's learning.

It is important to note that all these materials are protected by copyright and other intellectual property laws. This means they cannot be copied, distributed, or used without La Escuelita's permission. Any unauthorized use of these materials could have legal consequences, including potential monetary penalties.

La Escuelita respects others' intellectual property rights and expects the same in return. By adhering to this policy, La Escuelita can ensure that its intellectual property is protected and that its students, parents, and educators can access high-quality educational materials.

EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

La Escuelita is committed to hiring and retaining highly qualified staff to provide exceptional care and education. All staff meet or exceed the requirements outlined by the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) and the Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL). The hiring process ensures that all employees are equipped with the necessary credentials, skills, and training to promote the development and well-being of children.

Staff Qualifications and Roles

- Classroom teachers are required to have an Early Childhood Education credential, including Initial, Short, and State Certificates, an Associate of Arts (AA) degree, or a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in Early Childhood Education, Bilingual/Bicultural Education, or a related field, depending on their role.
- Early Childhood Classroom Teachers work collaboratively in teams to support children's cognitive, social-emotional, physical, bilingual, bicultural, and cross-cultural development, including infant, waddler, toddler, preschool, Prekinder, and school-age children.
- Classroom teachers rotate the duties of three team positions: Classroom Management Teacher, Student Assessment Teacher, or Curriculum Development Teacher. Under the guidance of a supervisor, the teaching team defines and delegates the responsibilities for these roles.
- Teachers implement La Escuelita's Curriculum and Assessment program and actively promote parent engagement and collaboration with families and staff.

Hiring, Evaluation, and Probation

- Teachers are hired for the academic year (September to June) and are evaluated for rehire based on:
 - Performance evaluations.
 - Professional development and training completion.
 - Punctuality and attendance.
 - Collaboration with families and the school community.
- All new employees undergo a six-month probationary period to assess their fit for the role and ability to meet job requirements. During this period:
 - Employees receive ongoing feedback through staff meetings and supervisor evaluations.
 - Employees are either offered a permanent position or terminated at the end of the probationary period.

Mandatory Training and Requirements

1. **MERIT Registration:**
All employees must register with the MERIT system before employment to allow La Escuelita access to their STARS ID, criminal background check results, work history, and training records.
2. **First Aid and CPR Certification:**
Employees must obtain Infant, Child (Pediatric), and Adult First Aid and CPR certification before employment. This certification is necessary for employees to be left alone with children.
3. **HIV/AIDS and Bloodborne Pathogens Training:**
Required within 90 days of employment to ensure proper handling of blood or body fluids emergencies.
4. **Food Handler's Permit:**
Employees responsible for food preparation or serving must hold a current Food Handler's Permit issued by a county health department.

5. STARS Training:

Employees must complete the 30-hour Child Care Basics STARS Training within the first 90 days of employment. An additional 10 hours of STARS training are required annually to maintain compliance and ensure continued professional development.

6. Educational Requirements:

- Employees without an ECE degree must be registered in an ECE certification program.
- All staff receive training in La Escuelita’s curriculum process to ensure consistent program implementation.

7. Criminal Background Check:

- A background check must be completed before employment. New employees cannot be unsupervised with children until they receive clearance.
- Employees must complete a disclosure form regarding criminal history or any civil adjudication of abuse or exploitation.

8. Mandated Reporting:

- All employees must watch the video “Making a CPS Referral: A Guide for Mandated Reporters” and review the book “Protecting the Abused and Neglected Child—A Guide for Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect.”
- Employees must report any suspected physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect, or exploitation immediately, per WAC 110-300-0475.

9. New Employee Orientation:

- All employees participate in a comprehensive orientation conducted by the Program Supervisor. Orientation includes:
 - Reviewing all school policies.
 - Classroom observation and shadowing a senior employee for two weeks before working independently

10. Professional Development:

Employees must engage in ongoing professional development to stay informed of best practices in early childhood education and meet state licensing requirements.

Additional Responsibilities

- Employees must develop collaborative and respectful relationships with families, colleagues, and children.
- Teachers must support parent engagement by encouraging participation in school events and fostering meaningful partnerships.

Staff Professional Development

La Escuelita Bilingual School is a teacher training institute. We have permanent full-time staff and teachers training with us as they complete their teaching practicum. All staff undergo annual evaluations and ongoing observations to assist them in their professional development. La Escuelita has additional support services from an Early Childhood Development Specialist who provides technical assistance on-site through Child Care Resources. A nutritionist and consulting nurse from the Department of Public Health can provide technical assistance and training. La Escuelita is committed to also working with our staff and with the greater early childhood community to develop bilingual-bicultural teachers that:

- 1) They are fully bilingual, bicultural, bi-literate, extremely resourceful, with excellent problem-solving and collaborative leadership skills, and prepared as change agents and advocates for children and families.
- 2) Continually assess the social, political, and cultural contexts within which children and families live, grow, and develop; are aware of how culturally based social interactions shape development; and model strategies for supporting children in resisting bias, rejecting negative cultural messages, and developing their sense of artistic self.

- 3) Recognize parents as their young children's first and primary educators. Be aware of culturally specific child-rearing and educational practices and engage in dialogue and partnerships with parents.
- 4) Know the processes associated with children developing their first and second languages; are aware of the impact of racial discrimination on linguistic and intellectual development; and establish culturally democratic learning communities in which children are not forced to choose between academic success and their cultural community, but instead develop critical, creative, and culturally relevant thinking skills in both languages.
- 5) Are familiar with bilingual culturally relevant models of education; assess language and cultural backgrounds of children, parents, and staff members; observe the play and interactions of children; and design and implement program models that respond to the specific linguistic, cultural, and developmental needs of children, families, and staff members.
- 6) Understand the role of culture and language in people's lives; understand culturally relevant anti-bias approaches to education; and build curriculum based on lived experiences, generative themes and interests, cultural and linguistic histories, and observations of play and interaction of the children and families in their programs.

-Soy Bilingüe, 2003

In-Service Training Closures:

Over the year, we close the center on selected Fridays to offer our staff six paid in-service training. These trainings serve as part of our professional development program and as a benefit that we provide to our staff to further their education. During our in-service closures, teachers are provided training that they can count towards their STARS professional development hours, which the Department of Licensing requires. They also allow our teaching teams to meet and work on their classroom environment and child assessment files. One of the in-service closures is dedicated to Parent Teacher Conferences, allowing parents to speak with all their child's teaching team members. Please check the annual calendar for the in-service closure dates and Parent Teacher Conferences.

Staff Appreciation

At La Escuelita, we recognize and celebrate the hard work, dedication, and passion that our staff brings to the children, families, and the school community. Throughout the year, we make intentional efforts to show appreciation for our fantastic team:

- **Staff Bonuses:** Staff receive bonuses as a token of appreciation for their contributions to our school's mission and success.
- **Staff Child Gift Drive:** Each year, we organize a gift drive to support the children of our staff during the holiday season.
- **Monthly Birthday Celebrations:** We celebrate staff birthdays every month to honor and uplift each team member on their special day.
- **Teacher Appreciation Week:** This dedicated week highlights our gratitude for teachers through events, treats, and tokens of appreciation.
- **Teacher Favorite Things List:** The office maintains a list of each staff member's favorite items for parents who wish to give ongoing tokens of appreciation. Parents are encouraged to contact the office for access to this list or guidance on contributing equitably.
- **Fairness and Equity** While we understand that families may naturally develop closer relationships with certain staff members due to bilingual abilities or other factors, we ask that all parents treat and gift all staff members equally. Every team member plays a vital role in creating a nurturing, bilingual, and culturally inclusive environment for children, and fairness in recognition ensures a positive and respectful workplace.

Please get in touch with the director if you have questions about staff appreciation or would like to participate in any of these efforts.