

Educational Concept of the Daycare & Kindergarten LaSoNa



Children are like Plants

Children are like plants, they need warmth and light.
Children long to grow and can't without sun's might.

Children are like plants, only grow if protected.
Children can grow, if they are supported.

Children are like plants, they need freedom and space.
Children long to grow, do not keep them in place.

Children are like plants, need nourishment to thrive.
We shan't forgive ourselves for children who are deprived.

Children are like plants, need love, need you:
They don't need to thank you, their growth tells you, too.

Ursula Dillenburger-Groß

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Guiding Principle

I am valuable as I am.

In our kindergarten, we welcome every child with its unique personality, temperament, interests and abilities. As educators, we regard it as our task to support and educate the children individually and at the same time introducing them to the social togetherness of a community. To achieve this, we provide the children with a safe environment and with offers that stimulate all senses.

There is a great variety of valuable educational approaches. We have not tied ourselves down to one particular educational approach, but develop our own teaching practice from the main elements of the different approaches. We essentially follow the situational approach, a social-educational concept. The pedagogical work is based on the social and cultural living conditions of the children/families that need to be taken into account on a constant basis. The child takes centre-stage, together with their entire living conditions and interests. To take these into account and to positively shape them is one of the emphases of our educational content. Thus, there is a strong focus on the children to autonomously learn and act. Simultaneously, they learn to feel responsible as a part of society, for their environment and for nature. Imparting of knowledge and active participation in nature serve to teach the children important skills and a positive basic attitude to their environment.

The three columns of our educational concept

Social Education

➤ **Development of a stable personality**

Many of our children live under special circumstances. They may not grow up in their country of birth, may be raised multilingually and experience different cultures. On the one hand this translates to a wealth of experience and open-mindedness, on the other hand this may cause insecurity. As we are conscious of this situation, we put a lot of emphasis on creating an atmosphere of security, comfort and acceptance. Our teachers think of themselves first as caring and loving reference persons who provide the children with a protected environment for the development of their individual personalities.

➤ **Development of Independence**

*„Help me to do it myself. Show me how.
Do not do it for me. I can and want to do it alone.
Be patient for me to understand my ways.
They may be longer, I may need more time,
because I want to try out.
Let me do mistakes, because from them, I may learn.“*
(Maria Montessori)

By providing many opportunities to try out for themselves without time pressure or excessive influence from outside we promote the children's independence. They learn to make their own decisions and bear possible consequences. They are encouraged to take on small tasks. Depending on the level of development. They learn to take care of their belongings, to set the table, to treat play materials with care. They learn to take responsibility for themselves and other children. They learn through experience that effort leads to achieving desired goals. We encourage the children to do a lot by themselves, e.g. to put on/off clothes or to clean up a spilled drink.

➤ **Development of social values**

The children's social development is closely related to the development of their own personality and pivotal for the integration into society at a later stage. This includes the ability to apprehend one's own needs as well as those of others and to link both with each other. During social interaction, the children learn to recognize if someone is in need of help, they show compassion and learn that some tasks are better solved together. Social competence also includes participation and the assumption of responsibility. We promote these by encouraging the children to express their desires and by establishing friendships and relationships but also by coping with differences and solving conflicts. Designing rules for disputes together promotes social interaction as well, whereby the example set by the teachers is essential.

Very often, we offer activities, during which the children have the opportunity to enhance their social competence. Among others, these activities include the common design of group rules, regular children's conferences during which the children can express their desires and learn to handle criticism, circle games and activities like cooking together, etc.

Teaching of Languages

„The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.“
(Ludwig Wittgenstein)

In our bilingual institution, the development of languages has special significance. In each of our bilingual groups (German/English, Spanish/English, French/English, Kiswahili/English), we have two teachers who each speak to the children in *one* language throughout.

We encourage the children to speak and create situations and room for conversation. We ensure to verbally involve the children in looking at picture books or telling of stories e.g. by asking questions, letting them retell the story or engaging them in discussions. Supportive measures contain circle games, finger games, singing games and role plays. Through daily interaction, the children learn to express their needs and feelings in different languages. The children talk to their friends in their respective languages hence reducing fears of new languages and cultures.

The weekly children's conference promotes the language development as well, since speaking, listening, discussing, philosophizing, consulting and arguing take centre stage here.

Nature Education

„Wonder is the beginning of science.“
(Aristoteles)

Nature education understands education as a holistic process. The methodological focus is not just on playful and explorative discovery but on sensory perception, creative work, meditative approaches and experimenting. Our particular concern is to initiate the conscious, responsible handling of living beings and the environment. The interaction with nature, its phenomena and processes has a positive impact on the children's development as a whole.

Our Nature Education's Objective

- Nature invites one to discover, to experiment, to experience adventure, to explore, to try oneself out and exercise, to have fun, etc.

In our institution, the above is ensured through our ample outdoor area with its different activity sections as well as weekly excursions into nature. The different areas on our property include places to climb and balance, a mud mountain, a hammock, an outdoor kitchen, a wood workshop, a fire place but also places for retreat and provide the children with vast experiences and opportunities to experiment.

- Nature invites one to learn with all the senses

*„I hear and I forget.
I see and I remember.
I do and I understand.“*
(Confucius)

In order to broaden the children's horizons and add to their experience, we design our own garden, in which the children can plant, follow growth processes and, in the end, use the harvested foodstuffs in the kitchen. The animal husbandry in which we keep small animals like chicken and rabbits enables the children to learn about these beings and take responsibility for their care. Natural phenomena are thus not just being observed but experienced with all the senses.

- Nature's habitat offers ideal conditions for a child's healthy, individual, holistic development.

Children have to test themselves and make experiences in order to establish an identity. The natural environment provides them with the possibility to discover things on their own, to develop motor skills and a healthy body image as well as to get to know their own limits.

- Nature calls for the responsible handling of herself

„We are only willing to protect what we know and love.“
(Prof. Heinz Sielmann)

Due to own experiences and encounters with animals and plants, the children can get to know and understand their indigenous nature as something worthwhile, worth living and worthy of protection. We believe that the appreciative handling of nature is not achieved by instructions but by personal experience and the example set by the teachers. Especially during early childhood, norms are set that will have a huge impact on our later behaviour.

Further educational principles

The significance of play

Play is part of the nature of a child, it constitutes forms of the ability to express oneself and it is an important way of learning. If a child interacts with an object or engages in an activity, you cannot differentiate between playing and learning. For a child, play equates a form of learning and working. This can be seen in the sand pit while baking sand cakes or building sand tunnels; it can be seen while building things with toy bricks, during role play, while independently exploring the environment, while romping around, etc. Play enables the child to deepen, repeat and practise their experiences with all the senses and from different perspectives at their own pace. The close relation between perception, movement, thought and action is an important condition for the acquisition of knowledge. Playing is thus the foundation for a successful learning process. Through play, the child has the chance to deal with conflicts and to stimulate their phantasy and activity. Therefore, play forms an important basis for the development and promotion of a child's personality.

For us, this means that we offer a wide variety of free and guided play to the children. The consequences for the indoor area are that various possibilities (building, reading, dolls, painting and crafting areas) are to be found, while we also provide the children with playful learning opportunities (card and board games, role play, ...). The resulting self-confidence and independence constitute a fundamental condition for „school readiness“. The first letters and numbers will also be imparted in a playful manner, according to needs. Pre-school work is not limited to the last kindergarten year, but rather part of the whole period that the children spend in our kindergarten.

Project Work

During project work, children can deal with a topic over a longer period of time, precisely as long as it takes to process it. Projects entail intensive participation of the children. When choosing the topics we consider the children's interests and ensure that they are part of the decision-making process. Thus, they see that their own interests are the focus of the work of the kindergarten. By engaging in project work, we promote the children's own initiative and enable them to work autonomously. Additionally, the children learn basic forms of democratic behavior. They work and learn across different groups and topics and get the good feeling to have achieved something on their own. If necessary, we consult with competent people from outside to support our project work.

Health Education

„The way to good health leads through the kitchen not the chemist.“
(Sebastian Kneipp)

We offer three meals in our institution: breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. It is ensured that meals are always freshly prepared by experts in our kitchen. We highly value a healthy, balanced diet which is kept as natural as possible. We are guided by the following principles:

Fresh fruits, vegetables, cereal and milk products are indispensable. Sufficient adequate fluid intake is of particular importance. Water, juice spritzers and teas are offered. Children love to actively prepare their meals and to use the kitchen as a field for experiments and a room for creativity. They learn about the origin of our food-stuffs, how these are produced and that they should be appreciated and used with care. Once a week, we all prepare breakfast together. We cut fruits and vegetables and mix dips for them. From time to time, breakfast is supplemented with self-baked bread.

We value table manners and eat in our group rooms. For the children, this means that they set the table aesthetically, eat in a relaxed atmosphere and enjoy the food. They learn fast which dishes are to be used and what for as well as how to handle them correctly. When the children set and decorate the table themselves, they show creativity and aesthetic sense while strengthening their self-esteem.

During lunch, there is a „table service“, this group sets the table together with the teaching staff. Every child clears its own dishes. Thereafter, the table service group takes care of the leftovers, cleans the tables and sweeps the floor if necessary. The children use china dishes and glasses to drink. This way they practice to use the dishes carefully. Moreover, they are not subjected to harmful chemicals in plastic.

Additionally, we protect the environment and fulfill our role model function. Before meals, the children wash their hands and after meals, they brush their teeth. Not only healthy nutrition but also body hygiene is an integral part of our educational attitude.

Exercise or general movement is an essential element of health education as well. We go for a walk to have some fresh air on a daily basis hence boosting the children's health and their immune system. In our outdoor area, we provide the children with an appealing environment that invites movement: they can balance, climb, run, jump, swing, ride scooters, play ball... etc. In addition, we offer specific games like singing and moving games, body awareness games and sensory games. Once a week, we have a common exercise lesson in the groups in order to specifically support the children in their motor skills and to introduce new exercises.

Settling in period

The transition from the family to the kindergarten is a fundamental development step for a child that requires an enormous adjustment from them. For the first time, the child has to separate from the persons they are most attached to and find their way around in a new environment. In order to successfully complete this transition from the family to the daycare/kindergarten, the children need our support. Therefore, we attach particular importance to a good adjusting period. Before the child starts to come to our institution, we conduct an entrance interview. Since every child is different, the adjusting period is handled individually. We always consider the respective needs of the children and the parents. In particular during the initial phase, the children need to be accompanied by their trusted persons. As to how long mothers, fathers or nannies stay with the child in the group, is different from child to child and also depends upon the child's age. In the beginning, the child is obviously allowed to carry something familiar from home that will help them to get used to the daycare/kindergarten.

If there are situations in which the surrounding conditions are not ideal, e.g. because the new job starts earlier than planned, we will look for a way together with the parents to make the adjustment period as relaxed as possible.

Parental involvement

The cooperation with the parents is a major focus to us, as we regard them as our partners in the educational work. Right from the beginning we attempt to build a trustworthy and open relationship with the parents and to consistently stay in touch. Therefore, we offer a variety of possibilities: informal chats in passing for a brief information exchange or conversations on demand with prior appointment. At least once a year, we have confidential development meetings. Parents are given the opportunity to sit-in in the groups after prior arrangement with the colleagues. There are also parents' evenings for the groups that may revolve around different topics. In these meetings, we would be glad to take up interests and desires concerning educational topics. We invite parents to join in the kindergarten work, to crafting and baking afternoons, to accompany excursions and to parents' projects. In the entrance area of our institution, there is an information board for the parents on which all relevant information regarding invitations, announcements and notifications can be found.

The parents' council elected by the parents in the beginning of a kindergarten year functions as a bridge between the parents and the teaching staff. It has the following responsibilities and opportunities:

- Participation in the design/redesign of the educational concept of the kindergarten
- Assisting in the organisation of festivities and celebrations
- Regular information exchange with the kindergarten staff on dates and new developments and the opportunity to have a voice

Our setup:

Premises

The Daycare/Kindergarten „LaSoNa,, is located directly behind the Ridgeways Mall. The kindergarten is situated in a big, cozy house with a heavenly outdoor area in a peaceful location.

All rooms are on the ground floor: two big group rooms for kindergarten children, an adjacent conservatory, our atelier, two further well lid group rooms for daycare children, one exercise room, one office, one staff room, a kitchen and wash-rooms/toilets. The outdoor area offers different opportunities for play. There is an outdoor kitchen, a mud mountain, a wood workshop, two climbing scaffolds, swings, a trampoline and a lot of space to run, play ball and for our own vegetable garden.

Group structure

We offer two bilingual kindergarten groups each with 20 children in the age of 3 to 6 years and two daycare groups each with 12 children in the age of 1.5 to 3 years. Each group is supervised by two educational experts/teachers. The families can choose between half-day and all-day care.

Our opening hours

Monday to Thursday from 7.30hrs until 16.30hrs

Friday from 7.30hrs until 14.30hrs

Meals for the children

Breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack are being prepared in our institution. We emphasize a healthy balanced diet which is kept as natural as possible. All meals are freshly prepared in our kitchen.

Fees for four months/one term

Kindergarten all-day:	\$1.700
Kindergarten half-day:	\$1.550
Daycare all-day:	\$1.550
Daycare half-day:	\$1.300
Meals:	\$ 260

Staff

Our team consists of:

- one headteacher
- one deputy headteacher
- seven trained teachers
- one cook
- one kitchen assistant/janitor
- one caretaker
- security staff.

Contacts

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Closing remarks

*If a child lives with criticism,
they learn to condemn.*

*If a child lives with hostility,
they learn to fight.*

*If a child lives with ridicule,
they learn to feel shy.*

*If a child lives with shame,
they learn to feel guilty.*

*If a child lives with tolerance,
they learn patience.*

*If a child lives with encouragement,
they learn confidence.*

*If a child lives with praise,
they learn appreciation.*

*If a child lives with fairness,
they learn justice.*

*If a child lives with security,
they learn to have faith.*

*If a child lives with approval,
they learn to like himself.*

*If a child lives with friendship,
they learn to find love in the world.*

Proverb from Tibet