



## **Kindergarten Overview**

The primary focus of our kindergarten is, in short, learning how to go to school: how to work together as well as individually, how to listen well and be respectful of others, how to work and play creatively within the safe boundaries of a group, how to be patient and persevere, and how to be ready to take in the gems of knowledge that will be presented during the next many years as schoolchildren.

### **Morning Circle**

Morning circle consists of seasonal songs and poems choreographed into a story line incorporating large and small movement, quiet and loud, spoken and sung word, repetition, expansion and contraction, practice with alliteration, moving and speaking in harmony with the group, and a picture story of nature and the seasons around us. These exercises require the child to develop memory, attention, small and large motor control, self and social awareness, and sensory integration. Rhythmical walking and clapping to verse and song also set the stage for arithmetic practice in the grades.

### **Morning Activity**

This part of our day is made up primarily of focused multi-sensory activities, exercising the senses of touch, smell, color, warmth, occasionally taste, and also fine motor control, along with practicing desirable "school" behavior at the work tables. Our regular activities include wet-on-wet watercolor painting, kneading bread, coloring with beeswax crayons (including block crayons), cutting vegetables for soup, and doing handwork. Our handwork activities include work with wool, yarn, needle, thread, felt and flannel cloth, scissors, and wood. This work provides children many opportunities to learn practical arts, practice patience and perseverance, follow directions, organize materials, develop fine motor skills, overcome frustration, and express creativity. Math finds its way to our table through dividing up the dough, as well as counting the children and dividing the whole into the right number of parts.

### **Creative Free Play**

Throughout creative play the children engage in problem solving, self-modulation and social communication. Included here are activities such as building houses of cloth and play stands, sand play, creating and performing plays or puppet shows, books, coloring, puzzles, creating marble tracks, taking gnomes for a wagon ride, pretending, playing house (or puppies or kitties or...). Children may also be asked to help move tables or chairs or grind flour, thus providing opportunities to use the will forces to carry out productive work. Creative play is also a time when children naturally practice life math" or "life science" every day — in the dividing-up-fairly of toys to share or in the discovery of the physical forces of nature. Children learn social skills, self-regulation, and sharing; personal boundaries and others' boundaries.

### **Porch Play**

Children will also have extended opportunities to develop many of the above skills and more as they play on our back porch area, which is equipped with a small balance beam, garden bed, sand (and sometimes water) area, outside kitchens, stumps, sidewalk chalk, and table space for those who choose sit down activities.

### **Tidy Up**

At Tidy Up Time, we will have a fully dismantled classroom and messy porch and sand area to put quickly in order. All are expected to help with tidying up. When tidying is done we will transition to a round of handwashing, and prepare for snack.



### Snack

We begin snack with a finger exercise and a thankful song. Then we may eat. During snack we require our "finest manners." Children learn to sit and eat their food in quiet reverence. Sometimes, children practice storytelling and speaking to the whole group, while others listen quietly. Many children relish in being the speaker, but find it challenging to be the listener. The beautifully courteous manners expected at our snack table/activity table will ready them for the transition to working diligently at their tables when they enter grade one!

When snack is finished, we say a closing verse, and children are released to change into outdoor things, with a few children staying behind to help the teacher clean up the snack table, providing another opportunity to engage the will forces in productive work.

### Outside Play

This is our least structured time of day, a time to let off steam after working hard to follow "inside" rules all morning. We still require the same rules of respect, kindness, safety, and inclusion, but the decibel limits are lifted, and when we are on the "big playground," so are the speed limits! This time, like creative play time, is an opportunity to engage the imagination, as well as practice social skills, self-regulation, sharing, and communication.

### Storytelling

After letting off some steam with outdoor play, children use their finest story circle manners as they sit upright in chairs for an opening verse and a story. Stories are carefully chosen for their poetic language and the images they evoke in the children's imaginations, in hopes of instilling in them a love of language and literature, as well as the natural world around us. Pedagogical stories are also carefully chosen to meet the specific behavioral and/or emotional needs of each particular class. Some stories lend themselves nicely to a table-puppet show given by the teacher, or an informal "play", which the children act out while the teacher narrates.

### Lunch Time

We have the most amazing lunch program, with meals prepared in a scratch kitchen, utilizing local and organic ingredients as much as possible! When all are seated with their lunch, we say a thankful verse and then we may eat. Children are expected to use table manners and speak in "whisper" voices, which are voices that can be heard by the other children at their table. After lunch, we say a closing verse and children clean up their own table area.

### Puzzles, Games, Table Choices

This is a time of table activities, including coloring, dough play, games, working alone or with friends on a puzzle, or looking at books. During this time, children who are ready might choose to experiment with writing or reading. No child is "pushed" into these academic activities, and those who show interest are gently encouraged, nurtured, and supported at a level that is appropriate for them.

### Outside Play & Rest Time

After another outdoor play period, children are encouraged to rest their bodies quietly on their own mat, first "making their bed," then looking at a book as they get settled, next listening to a story. Then, rest time is over, sheets are removed and stored, mats are returned to their homes.

### Closing Circle

At the end of our day, we have a closing circle to signal the end of our time together and to send each other off in a positive, caring way, teachers thanking children and children thanking teachers.