

Parent Handbook

MISSION

Our Mission at Dandy Lion Montessori School is simply to serve the children of the exceptional parents in our community, who are truly concerned about the future of their children in these uncertain times. We provide our students with the very best start in their lifelong learning adventure, by implementing an authentic Montessori program, which the International Association of Progressive Montessori (IAPM) is respected for worldwide. We excel in maintaining a specially prepared educational environment for their budding minds to explore and utilize in developing critical thinking skills.

Beyond providing a full complement of authentic Montessori didactic materials, and genuinely respecting children engaged in the awe-inspiring process of developing a unique mind of their own, we provide a safe, clean, orderly, and loving atmosphere devoid of judgmental stress. The serene classrooms are conducive to the atmosphere of concentration, which is essential to organize a young mind to comprehend the incredible volume of information they will encounter as joyful diligent learners in the 21st Century.

We acknowledge that our role as educators in this reality-based environment is critical to the child obtaining the most benefit from it. It is our job to help the child learn *how* to think - not *what* to think. We welcome the challenge and always give it our best effort, for the sake of the children entrusted to our care, and in appreciation of the parents who select our school.

HISTORY

The Dandy Lion Preschool was established in 1981 by the Veness family, and has earned an excellent reputation while serving this community for many years. The Veness' retired in November of 1996 when Ann Balasuriya and Dave Hunter purchased the school to provide a location for Ann's Montessori Teacher-Training Institute on the Central Coast. By January of 1997, the Rainbow Room was converted into a Montessori Prepared Environment and the name of the school was slightly revised to Dandy Lion Montessori School to reflect the change to a Montessori program.

In early 1998, the second room was also converted to a lovely Montessori classroom. When the 98/99 academic year began, both classrooms were fully functioning Montessori classes. With little advertising, Dandy Lion has maintained a stellar word-of-mouth reputation, for excellence as an authentic Montessori Program. and receives great feedback on the success of our graduates from parents, grandparents, and other schools.

STAFF

All staff members have been carefully selected for their training, credentials, competence, loving attitude towards children, and personal goals to achieve excellence in their chosen profession. We are blessed with stability, as all have worked here for many years. Ann, our director, is also the Executive Director of the International Association of Progressive Montessori, a professional Montessori association. She has 36 years of Montessori experience teaching, administrating, establishing schools, and teacher training centers.

She has served on the board and on the commission of MACTE, the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education and still works as a teacher educator and Montessori consultant. She personally trained all of the staff over the years to ensure the quality she desired. Rhonda Eskew is the head teacher in the Rainbow room, and Nikki Callahan is head teacher in the Sunshine room. Both had extensive experience and were fully qualified directors of other preschools, before acquiring an additional 30 Early Childhood Education (ECE) units in earning their Montessori Teacher diplomas. Rhonda opens the school for morning childcare. Laura Zarate is our assistant teacher in the Rainbow room and manages the afternoon childcare program. Elvia Angilina Coria is our assistant teacher in the Sunshine room. Cyndie Burke is our Substitute teacher.

PROGRAM

Education at Dandy Lion Montessori School follows a developmental approach that strives to educate the whole child, establishes a solid foundation, and inspires a lifelong joy in learning. The program is designed to promote intellectual growth, artistic creativity, critical thinking skills, social responsibility, flexibility, and preparedness for the fast changing life our children face in the future. We pride ourselves on offering an excellent program in a loving relaxed atmosphere that respects the child's pace and interests.

LIST OF STAFF

Ann Balasuriya	Owner / Director
Rhonda Eskew	Head Teacher – Rainbow Room Curriculum Coordinator Morning Daycare Teacher
Nikki Callahan	Head Teacher – Sunshine Room
Laura Zarate	Assistant Teacher – Rainbow Room After-School Program Teacher Nap Room Teacher
Elvia Angelina Coria	Assistant Teacher – Sunshine Room Nap Room Teacher
Cyndie Burke	Substitute Teacher
Catherine Wallace	Administrator

EDUCATION PROGRAM

We welcome you to the Dandy Lion Montessori School. We hope you will enjoy your visit, have all your questions answered, and receive all the information you need to help you make the decision to enroll your child in our school.

The Dandy Lion Montessori School is a non-denominational private school serving the educational needs of children aged 2 ½ to 6 years. The school follows principles that

develop an identifiable mark of quality and excellence in education.

PHILOSOPHY:

We are committed to the philosophy of authentic Montessori education. We believe that facilitating the intellectual, physical, emotional, and socio-spiritual development of the child is essential to the harmonious development of character and the progress of the individual and therefore mankind. The philosophy of the program is based on truth in learning. No ideological interpretation is insinuated into the curriculum.

The children are given facts, encouraged to use critical thinking and arrive at their own conclusions. On a daily basis the children experience cause and effect. They learn through activities with concrete materials in an atmosphere of trust and respect for their efforts. We follow the rule set out by Dr. Montessori: "Don't let the child risk failure until he has experienced success many times." Thus, we empower him/her to take on greater challenges.

OUR GOALS:

Our primary goal has always been to earn and maintain the reputation as the very best preschool in our community, with the highest paid professional staff of any private school in the area. We achieved that status in our first year as a Montessori school, and work hard to maintain it.

We do not spend a lot of money on advertising, and count on satisfied parents to disseminate our reputation by word-of-mouth. Considering it our best promotion, we continue to endeavor to earn parent's trust and goodwill.

Valuing diversity in our program, we welcome working parents as well as those who value a Montessori program for educational reasons; and unlike most Montessori schools, we welcome CAPSLO subsidized children.

CHILD-CENTERED PROGRAMS:

Our programs are geared to meet the needs of each child on an individual basis with emphasis being placed on the child's uniqueness. We provide a wide range of activities from which the child may select, thereby developing his independence by making decisions. The child enjoys a freedom, which encourages him to express

his creative abilities and master the skills necessary to build self-confidence and good self-esteem. This freedom is experienced within a structured framework established by the teacher with limits to provide security for the child and insure progress in all areas of his/her development. Discipline is established in a firm but loving way, always emphasizing the positive and by using consistency in reinforcing simple basic ground rules.

PROGRAM:

The aim of our educational program is to provide the scientifically prepared environment for the complete development of the potentialities of each individual child. Essential to this development is that the child should feel secure and at ease. For this reason the classrooms are especially adapted to child's size and provide an attractive, bright and warm atmosphere in which the child can feel at home.

Because human beings, in the state of development, are capable of growth at four different levels: (1) motor-muscular, (2) intellectual, (3) emotional, and (4) socio-spiritual, the class is a prepared environment which includes all conditions, materials and activities conducive to the development of the child at each of these levels. This requires that children be grouped in what is known as "Family Grouping" for ages 2 1/2 to 6 years. This also requires that the schedule of the day be organized as an "Integrated Day" of free activities. This offers the child opportunities to choose among several possibilities of being constructively and creatively active. It is through this free choice that a child develops his personal initiative and sense of responsibility toward himself, the other children, and his environment.

The task of the teacher in our classroom is more that of guide than that of instructor. This is why the teacher is normally called the directress. Her main function is to be a link between the child and the learning activities, by means of which the child has the opportunity of developing his individual potentialities to the utmost, under the guidance of a teacher who understands his needs. Adapted to the children's age group and stage of development, our classrooms are lovingly prepared by the teacher to meet the needs of your child. They are spotlessly clean, orderly, full of inspirational interesting activities, creative and ready for joyful learning in a secure setting, both indoors and outdoors.

THE MONTESSORI PROGRAM 2 1/2 - 6 YEARS

The environment for children between ages 2 1/2 to 6 consists mainly of the following areas:

Exercises of Practical Life

These exercises lay the foundation of a Montessori program. They are everyday life skills that children learn in order to function in society. These activities satisfy the need for imitation, and help develop coordination. They enable children to expand

their attention span and develop concentration essential for all academic learning to manifest. Independence, self-confidence, body consciousness, and self-awareness develop steadily through the use of materials for: caring for oneself and the environment, social skills of grace and courtesy, and control and refinement of movement. The child is naturally attracted to these delightful activities. By joyfully carrying them out, he/she will prepare the hand to write and the mind to read. Indirect learning lays the best foundation.

Sensorial Materials

All the faculties of intelligence are developed through the senses, so exploration of the various sensorial materials varying in dimension, color, shape, texture, smell, and taste build up the child's intellect. These special materials are organized to develop and refine each sense while isolating them from the other senses in the body; thus enabling the utmost refinement of the ability to discriminate quickly. The differences, similarities, and identities enhance the memory, build imagination, and consequently develop appreciation and interpretation of the fine arts.

Mathematical Materials

These are activities by means of which the child does not learn mathematics, but discovers them; acquiring the necessary skills to calculate in the decimal system and explore moving from concrete experiences to abstraction. Using a step by step approach and concrete materials, the child develops a love of math, simply because he understands.

Language Materials

These are activities by which the child acquires, phonetically, the basic skills for complete writing and reading, and at a very early age, understanding of the parts of speech, oral expression, creative writing and interpretative reading and appreciation of prose and poetry. The Language area includes also what we call "keys to the cultural subjects," because once the child is versatile in the use of all the above skills, he possesses the necessary tools to explore the world of knowledge. So we include a cultural curriculum for your child's enjoyment.

Cultural Subjects

An extensive cultural curriculum offers General Science, Human Anatomy, Biology, Zoology, Botany, History, Geography, and Ecology materials, with sequenced activities designed to bring the world into the classroom.

CULTURAL CURRICULUM

- **Universe:** Study of the Solar System.
- **Earth:** Layers of the Earth, study of the globe, hemispheres, continents, land and water formations, oceans, and zones.
- **Myself:** Parts of the human body, internal organs, senses, and all the important systems of the human body.
- **Health and Physical Hygiene:** Food pyramid. Cleanliness and its importance.
- **Community Services:** Making children aware of the civic sense while studying community, personal individuality and contribution to society.
- **Continents:** Each continent in detail, places, people, food, dress, customs. A cultural study
- **Biomes of a Continent:** Environment Ecosystems Inter-dependencies of Plant, Animal and Human Life.
- **Biology:** A systematic study of Plant and Animal Life.
- **Values Program:** Simultaneously every month a famous artist, composer, famous person or event and human value. Exposing children to the diversity of human life at the same time seeing the similarities that we all share.

**A detailed cultural curriculum is available in the office for any parent who is interested in seeing it.

Art and Music

Art and music are integrated into our program and are a part of the child's daily experience. Thereby providing an enriched well prepared environment from which your child can absorb knowledge, develop, and express his/her creativity with confidence.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Dandy Lion Montessori School is a non-denominational private school serving the educational and developmental needs of children 2 ½ to 6 years. The full program is a three-year cycle covering both the preschool and kindergarten years. The third year is very important to allow the child the opportunity to benefit from the previous sensorial foundation and move into abstract thinking - building both the language and math skills that provide for a lifetime of joyful learning. It is based on family grouping, which has benefits for both the younger and older children. Our programs are designed to meet the needs of working parents and include both full time, part time, and extended day schedules.

SCHOOL HOURS

Please recognize that this is a school, not a daycare facility. While we offer extended hours to meet the needs of working parents, you may not drop-off or pick-up your child at just any inopportune time. Our daily schedule is strategically designed so that the noon hour, and the first and last half hour of each day, is our "recess" or playground time. This allows the inevitable flux of daily arrival and departure times to occur **when least disruptive to our academic program**. The morning session begins at 8:30 AM and ends at 12:30 PM, and the afternoon session runs from 12:30 PM until 3:30 PM. Although we try hard to convince parents to at least arrive before the bell rings at 8:50 or 12:50, arriving late or departing early up to 30 minutes only deprives children of some of their essential social time. Thirty minutes should be more than enough leeway so, to safeguard student concentration, once begun at 9:00 or 1:00 we do everything possible to prevent any class disruptions.

For instance, teachers will not be disturbed for a phone call during class time unless there is a true emergency.

Not simply daycare, neither are we truant officers. Parents may freely choose to keep their child home on any day that our inflexible schedule is inconvenient to theirs, and full-day students are free to come or go during the noon recess window. We simply ask that you do not disrupt the program once class is in session **out of respect for the children**. While it might seem that only the punctually challenged might be a problem, please understand that even an occasional transgression is a problem. Considering the total number of children, if everyone did it only once a month this would average an untenable

two or three class disruptions per day. Therefore, a Book Fund "contribution" of \$5 will automatically be assessed to the account of any child arriving or departing anytime between 9:00 AM and 12:00 PM or 1:00 PM and 3:00 PM for any reason. We would prefer no disruptions.

To be effective, no exceptions are made — even for rare circumstances. Tardy or early departure times are recorded by staff on class attendance records and the accounting process will automatically bill for them regardless of cause. Doctor appointments and emergencies do happen, and it is unfortunate to have to charge for them. If you do find it unavoidable and must arrive during class time we request that you park on the street. This includes even when arriving a few minutes early and waiting for the class to end. Early arrival of parent vehicles in the parking lot inevitably attracts the attention of students in class, who are likely to start anticipating their own parent's arrival, and become distracted from the closure routine of the day.

Daily Schedule

07:30 AM	Open school, receive morning daycare children, set-up play activities.
08:30 AM	Outside playtime, receive children
08:50 AM	Bell rings, children prepare to enter classroom
09:00 AM	Bring class inside. Commence morning program
09:25 AM	Individual classroom activity.
10:00 AM	Snack Table opened.
11:15 AM	Music or Craft Time.
11:30 AM	Lunch
12:00 PM	Dismiss Half-Day children to parents, Full-Day children to playground.
12:00 PM	Set up mats for napping children.
12:30 PM	Nap time for napping children.
12:50 PM	Afternoon bell rings, children prepare to enter classroom.
1:00 PM	Afternoon class begins, story time / new presentation.
1:15 PM	Individual work time.
2:30 PM	Teacher Group / Assistant Teacher maintenance
2:45 PM	Class clean-up time. / Napping children get up.
3:00 PM	Outside play time.
3:30 PM	After-School Program activity.
4:15 PM	Snack Served. Clean up outside (depending on weather).
5:15 PM	Free choice activities inside. Classroom clean-up - prepare for next day.
5:30 PM	School closes.

PARTING

If you and your child have difficulty parting, you will find it much easier on everyone if done on the playground, so please try to exit no later than 8:45. The best plan is to make your departure matter-of-fact and expeditious, and don't allow the "one more hug/kiss" routine to get started. It's more difficult to stop it. Parting dramas are harder on parents than children. When you are out of sight they usually forget the whole episode within a couple of minutes

and join friends in cheerful play on the playground. Ask one of the teachers to redirect your child if necessary.

ADMISSION AND ATTENDANCE POLICY:

All children aged 2 ½ - 6 years regardless of race, national origin, and religion are eligible for enrollment. A Director - Parent interview will be conducted to exchange information relative to the child's welfare. Application, medical clearance, and registration forms are to be completed. The first month's tuition and registration fee are to be paid on acceptance of your child into the program.

WAITING LIST

In order to keep our waiting list meaningful and manageable, we require applicants to complete the entire registration process, and pay the non-refundable Annual Registration Fee, before being placed on it. This not only assures that applicants are serious, but facilitates their ability to react quickly to an unexpected opening.

- While ideally the waiting list is kept on a first come, first served basis, there are several caveats:
- Obviously, a part-time opening requires a fit with an applicant willing to accept the available schedule.
- When possible, preference is given to preexisting part-time children wishing to add time to their schedule, to previously enrolled children, or others already familiarized with the Montessori curriculum elsewhere.
- Continuity of income being important to the success of the school, preference may be given to an applicant prepared to act immediately to accept an unforeseen opening and/or also applying for the summer program.
- It is important to the Montessori Method of education to try to maintain a balance among the ages, gender, and temperaments of the children in a classroom. An opening occasioned by the withdrawal of a 4 1/2 year-old boy, for example, might be offered to a similar child before a 2 1/2 year-old girl, application dates notwithstanding.

SIGN-IN / SIGN-OUT POLICY:

To meet the State law requirement it is our policy to have the parents Sign-In and Sign-Out their children entering the time and **using their full signature daily**. To insure the utmost safety of our children, parents are asked to park their cars and walk their children inside the school. If you have a message for your child's teacher, please leave it with the Office Manager or clip it to the sign-in board.

Cell Phones

When you arrive to pick-up your child, he or she is excited to see you. It is important to recognize and validate the child's joy at the sight of you. So, we request that you **leave your cell phone in your car**, and give your full attention to your child at that critical time.

SCHEDULING AND CREDIT POLICIES:

To maintain the quality of our program, yet keep it affordable for the average family in our community, it is essential that we maintain full enrollment and collect tuition for every space each month. This requires careful planning and a firm collection policy. Our Administrative Office alone makes all scheduling and credit decisions, freeing others to focus on the education of children. We ask that our teaching staff not be bothered with administrative inquiries. The Administrator is resolute in adhering to these policies, so to avoid future misunderstandings, please read carefully the following:

Applicants are declaring their intent to remain enrolled for the full academic year, and agree to give at least 30 days written notice before withdrawing from the program. Likewise, we agree to give at least 30 days written notice before any tuition increase takes effect.

This is a tuition-based educational institution, not an attendance-based daycare facility. Tuition is collected in advance to reserve a space in our program, without regard to whether a child actually attends on any given day, or the reason for any absence (planned for or not).

Think tuition — not childcare. Trying to compare the cost per hour, day, or week of our program, with traditional childcare, is a two-fold mistake. The educational value is simply incomparable. With long and short months, Winter and Spring breaks, and holidays, the actual number of school days each month fluctuates anywhere from 15 to 23 (the avg. is 20), confounding attempts to calculate a unit cost. Again, you are paying for a space, and no refunds will be made, or credit given, for absences during the academic year, for any reason.

SCHEDULING

We cannot always guarantee part-time applicants specific days of the week, but once established schedules are generally fixed for the year.

Rearranging a part-time child's schedule is difficult at best, usually requiring the cooperation of another party willing to switch days.

Incidental swapping or adding days is only possible when there is a predictable absence so we appreciate being informed as soon as possible when a child will be absent. We cannot offer free "make-up" days for absences or holidays, so please don't even ask.

TUITION PAYMENTS

Monthly payments are simply 1/10th of the annual tuition fee for the 10-month academic year.

The summer program is available at these same monthly rates in July and August.

You may elect to have tuition fall due on either the 1st or the 15th of the month. A

five-day grace period allows for months when these dates fall on a weekend, holiday, or other non-attendance day.

ACCOUNTING

As an incentive to minimize accounting chores, we offer a generous prompt-pay discount for simply paying tuition on time.

To earn it, an account must be current, and payments received no later than the 5th for those due on the 1st, or by the 20th if due on the 15th.

To ensure this incentive remains effective, there will be no exceptions for payments made even one day beyond the grace period.

Anyone anticipating difficulty making a payment on time should discuss it with the Administrative Office before it is due.

Any check returned unpaid by your bank must be redeemed with cash plus a \$25 accounting fee. Since the grace period has usually passed by the time a check is returned, any prompt-pay discount taken was unearned and the full amount must be paid, making for a very expensive banking error. After a second occurrence, personal checks may no longer be accepted for payment.

PAST DUE ACCOUNTS

Accounts missing the prompt-pay discount are already 5 days past due.

Once 10 days past due, we may not allow the child to attend school until the account is brought current. For your child's sake, please help us avoid this unpleasant decision.

After 15 days past due, we may deem you to have withdrawn from the program by default, and the space forfeited to someone on the waiting list. We will be very sad for the child, but must keep our program economically viable for all the other children.

Once withdrawn for any reason, full payment of all past due amounts, plus a new Registration Fee, is required before a child is again eligible for the waiting list, where we may give preference to a previously enrolled child.

SUMMER VACATIONS

We define "vacation" as a planned absence of one or more full weeks for which we receive written notice at least three weeks in advance.

We allow $\frac{1}{4}$ month credit for each full week of "vacation" taken during the summer months (July and August) only.

Year-round students not taking "vacation" during the summer months, after maintaining their account current for a full year, may receive up to $\frac{1}{2}$ month credit in the month of August

for vacations taken during the previous academic year.

Students taking the summer off may reserve their space for the next year by prepaying September's tuition before departing.

BOOK FUND CONTRIBUTIONS

Unlike many schools, we do not have annual book or materials fees. Instead, we have a Children's Book Fund that is funded by ad hoc assessments for transgressions of a few rules we find it necessary to enforce to maintain consistency in our structure.. We ask that you cheerfully make these contributions when assessed. Try not to get upset with us for collecting them, as we will put the fees to good use to benefit the children.

We are required by law to ensure that an authorized adult signs each child in and out with a **full** signature every day. To enforce this rule, we assess a \$5 Book Fund charge for **each** occurrence of missing or illegible signatures on the sign-in/out logs. Please advise your surrogates of this necessity when asking someone else to drop-off or pick-up your child, for the responsibility remains yours.

To safeguard the children's concentration, we endeavor to deter tardiness and/or early pick-ups. **The first and last half hour of each class session is recess time**, so one can be up to 30 minutes late arriving, or early departing, without disrupting the formal class period. Therefore, tardiness or early pick-ups between the hours of 9:00 AM and Noon, or 1:00 and 3:00 PM for any reason will incur a \$5 Book Fund charge. Please understand that, to be consistent, this must include **all** situations, even understandable ones like doctor appointments, etc

LATE PICK-UP CHARGES

Arriving even one minute late to pick-up a child, past the time you have contracted for, automatically incurs an incidental childcare charge. This is not a punitive charge, it is just the standard \$7 per hour (or any part thereof) charge for incidental childcare, but when only a few minutes late it can seem like one. Try to be on time to avoid the aggravation, but don't risk an accident or ticket just to save \$7.

Arriving after we close at 5:30 PM, however, can cause your child stress and is a very real imposition on our staff. As a deterrent, we charge a late pick-up fee of \$14 per $\frac{1}{4}$ hour or any part thereof. This means that those from one to fifteen minutes late at closing time are charged \$14. Those sixteen to thirty minutes late are

charged \$28, etc. Repeated violations here are unacceptable — the teacher has a family waiting at home! So, **PLEASE** be responsible, and have a relative or friend you can call in an emergency to pick-up your child by closing time.

MEDICATION POLICY:

For the safety of all children, no medication of any type will be administered by any member of the school staff. No medication will be kept at school. It is permitted for a parent to come to the school to administer medication to their child. Individual circumstances sometimes require special allowance - please discuss this with the Director.

DISCIPLINARY POLICY:

The school takes a positive approach to discipline, always emphasizing the positive by using consistency in reinforcing simple basic ground rules that set limits and provide a sense of security. The basic ground rules are posted in both the classroom and outside on the playground. Harsh treatment of any kind either verbal or physical is not permitted. Physical punishment is never a discipline alternative.

NAPPING POLICY:

All children under the age of four years old are required to take an afternoon nap. Once the child reaches their 4th birthday napping becomes optional, at the request of the parent, and/or based on readiness and space available in the afternoon class. This decision will be determined by the Director. Please speak with the director prior to discussing any changes with your child.

HEALTH CARE POLICY:

Dandy Lion Montessori School and its employees will not administer medication of any kind. This includes even cough drops! If a child needs to be given some medication, a parent will have to come to the school and administer it personally. PLEASE do not send any medication in a lunch box. . . lunches sometimes get mixed up.

Parents must have a plan for caring for their child when ill. Children shall not be permitted at school who display symptoms of, or who have any illness, including the common cold. For the benefit of all the children, we ask that each child be inspected at home before coming to school. **If any symptoms of illness are displayed, we ask that you keep the child home and give us a phone call.**

The following are a few of the most common symptoms that would warrant the child being kept home:

- Fever
- Diarrhea (especially if it is frequent or causes cramping)
- Persistent cough
- Runny nose (especially if discharge is not clear)
- Ear ache
- Head ache
- Sore throat
- Unusually tired or lethargic

If a child displays any of these symptoms at school, he/she will be isolated and parents will be phoned to pick up child.

If a child contracts something extremely contagious requiring immediate attention (such as impetigo, chicken pox, lice, scarlet fever, Hib, etc.), the school must be notified immediately so that other parents may be warned to watch for the symptoms. We also require a note from a physician stating that the child has been treated, is no longer contagious, and may return to the school. The child will not be re-admitted without the physician's note and an inspection by the director.

NUTRITIONAL POLICY:

Snack- Children are served a nutritious snack both mid-morning and late afternoon.

LUNCHES

We monitor children's lunches and make the following suggestions:

Try to keep in mind the four basic food groups:

- **Protein:** Peanut butter, chicken/beef, tuna, baked beans, etc.
- **Bread / Cereal:** Whole wheat bread, crackers, tortilla, noodles, etc.
- **Fruits & vegetables: Preferably fresh!**(watch the canned fruits and fruit rolls — they usually contain added sugar. Read the labels; you will probably be surprised!)
- **Milk & Dairy:** Cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, milk, etc.(Please, no pudding or "Gogurt"!)
- **To Drink:** Send milk (without Quik!) or 100% fruit juice
- We have an old tradition at school that any child may purchase milk at lunchtime for a dime. Tape the dime to the inside of the lunch box, and we will provide the milk.

PLEASE DO NOT SEND THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF ITEMS:

- Cookies
- Gum
- Candy
- Sodas
- Chips
- Twinkies, etc.
- Donuts
- Cupcakes
- Fruit drinks (they are full of sugar!)

Stay away from high sugar foods. Along with having nearly no nutritional value, high sugar foods can play real havoc with your child's metabolism--- giving him / her a sudden burst of energy then shortly leaving him / her with none.

BEWARE OF THE HIDDEN SUGARS IN THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- Granola bars
- Fruit rolls
- Fruit drinks
- Canned fruit

We will not force your child to eat the entire lunch, however, we will encourage him / her to eat as much as possible (protein items first). Food not eaten will be sent home with your child so you will know how much has been eaten. This is for your information, so you can adjust the quantity and type of items. Big people eat only enough to meet their needs— children should have the same opportunity.

DRESS AND EXTRA CLOTHES:

Casual, comfortable clothing and sturdy shoes should be worn. Clothing should also be easy for the child to remove (especially for the child who is still working on his toilet training). Please **never dress your child in super-hero themed shirts**, e.g. superman, spider man or power rangers, etc. as it influences behavior and encourages escape to a fantasy world, which interferes with the socialization of the child. No skimpy "Brittany" style girls-wear - girls' shirts should be modest and unrevealing. Open-toed shoes, sandals and boots (of any kind) are not allowed as it is difficult for a child to run and play in these types of shoes (sand in sandals is very uncomfortable) and the soles are often slippery. It is important that each child has an extra set of clothing, clearly labeled with his/her full name, left at school (including underwear and socks). It is equally important that these clothes be promptly replaced if used. Any spare clothing supplied by the school also needs to be promptly returned, ready for the next accident or emergency. Removable articles of clothing (e.g. coats, hats, sweaters and jackets) must be clearly labeled with the child's full name (a permanent marker is available on back shelf). This also applies to books, etc. brought to school. Note: **Only preschool size backpacks please**, as cubbies are small. Please send your child to school each day with a light sweater or jacket even if it appears to be warm out. As we all know, our weather here on the Central Coast can be unpredictable. A warm sunny morning can quickly turn into a cold foggy afternoon.

JEWELRY & SUNGLASSES:

Children may not wear or bring jewelry to school. The only exception will be small post earrings, which are not to be removed. We do not allow children to wear sunglasses on the playground due to safety reasons. However, we will make exceptions for children with a medical reason. Children sometimes run into each other and a broken pair of sunglasses can greatly injure a child's eyes or face.

BEDDING:

Napping children need a fitted crib sheet and a lightweight blanket left at school Monday through Friday. Make sure that all bedding is **clearly labeled** with your child's name. Bedding must be taken home on Friday, laundered, and returned to school on Monday. Please do not send comforters or large pillows, as we are unable to store large and bulky items and they will be sent home.

TOYS / SHARING:

Bringing toys to school is not allowed as these objects may break or get lost. However, **items of special interest** that the children want to share are most welcome and will be put on the observation table. Should your child find a grasshopper, frog or any live creature, please do not hesitate to send it in on the day of discovery! Other precious items related to a theme or subject being studied are very welcome. Each child may share only once a week. Please put the item into a bag with your child's name on it and store in your child's cubby until class time. **If the item is delicate please give it to the classroom teacher for safe-keeping.**

BIRTHDAYS:

We are happy to help you celebrate your child's birthday in school. To make it a special day we have a ritual that we know your child will enjoy. If it is possible, we would like a parent or both parents to attend.

We require your help in making your child's day memorable. Please bring to school:

- A photograph of your child taken on the day of his/her birth and a photo taken on each birthday since then.
- A short description of who was there when your child was born and how you felt about their arrival into the world.
- A similar description of each year of their life should accompany the photos of each birthday.
- Paste these photos and information on a poster board to create a life Time-line of your child.

These photos and information will be used when we celebrate your child's birthday and will be enjoyed by all the children during the celebration. You may prepare this life time-line and bring it with you on the day of celebration or leave it in the office the day before.

You may send individual treats for the children in your child's class to enjoy if you wish. Here are a few suggestions: Cookies, Rice Crispy Treats, individually wrapped treats, fruits or nuts.

We ask that you do not bring cupcakes or fancy birthday cakes, and please, no balloons or treat bags. We like to keep birthday celebrations simple but respect the importance of that special day for your child.

PARENT OBSERVATIONS:

We have an open door policy for parent observers. However, we request that you contact the office to schedule an observation so we do not have too many parents in on the same day. For the first six weeks of school it is important for the children to settle in and for the teachers to have this time to establish routines. For this reason, we will not schedule observations until the third week of October. If you have a particular concern, please discuss it with Ann.

PARENT CONFERENCES:

Parent/Teacher conferences are scheduled twice a year to discuss the child's progress. We consider these conferences to be a very important exchange between teacher and parents and we encourage both parents to attend. **Please check the calendar for dates.** Special conferences are called whenever the need arises.

PARENT EDUCATION:

Our Parent Education Programs are informative evening meetings held throughout the year by the Head Teachers to give parents a forum for discussion, gain information of child psychology and the Montessori approach to education. It's a time to get your questions answered, get to know some of the other parents and have a fun evening.

FIELD TRIPS:

Major field trips away from the school will require information being sent home in advance about the purpose, location, cost, means of transportation, and a request for parent participation. A special field trip permission form will be required, and you will have the opportunity to participate.

TRANSPORTATION:

Transportation of children to and from school is the responsibility of the parents/guardians.

EMERGENCIES:

Both Fire Drill and Earthquake drills will be scheduled on a regular basis.

VOLUNTEERS:

Parent participation is invited to support the teachers in preparing for and organizing special events. Parents are encouraged to sign up for the event that best suits their schedule and interests. Following is a list of events and positions you may care to sign up for:

- Class Parties - Coordinator or Helper - Check calendar for holiday parties
- Field Trip Driver - 2 field trips per year
- Library Parent - Coordinator or Helper - usually one visit per month
- Art Projects - Coordinator or Helper - share your talent
- Community Service Parent - Speaker - share your knowledge with a presentation
- School promotion.
- Fund raising coordinator.

MAINTAINING A POSITIVE APPROACH AND A NURTURING ATTITUDE

Below is a list of ways in which our teachers develop and maintain a positive approach and a nurturing attitude to enhance the development of your child:

- Always make positive remarks to the child
- Use a kind but firm manner when you need to discipline
- Always show respect in addressing a child or teacher
- Encourage children to be as independent as possible
- Do not call to a child across the room — go to him/her
- Preserve the dignity of the child if you have to reprimand him/her
- Do not paint yourself into a corner — no confrontations — take a positive approach
- Do not use negative terms, e.g. bad, naughty, baby, etc.
- Use the child's name and look into his eyes when talking to him/her
- Do not interfere with the child's work or play, but step in before he is frustrated
- Never react, always remain calm and loving
- Show appreciation for the child's effort
- Always use precise language and give clear directions.

DISCIPLINARY POLICY

Physical Punishment is **NEVER** a discipline alternative at Dandy Lion.

- Use a simple direct statement. Example: "We do not throw rocks here."
- Talk with the child about more appropriate solutions to his/her problem. Example: "If Suzy calls you 'Dummy' you can use your words. Tell her that you don't like that word. If that doesn't work, tell the teacher and she will help you."
- Remove the child from the situation. Have them sit on the thinking chair. Example: "If he/she is continually throwing sand, remove him/her from the sandbox for a period of time."
- "Thinking Time" is a safe, non-threatening, method of discipline. It gives the child time to calm down and a chance afterwards to discuss briefly with the teacher why the child was separated. Thinking Time usually lasts one minute per year of age. 3 year- olds are on the Thinking Chair for three minutes, for example.
- Behavior problems are usually discussed with the parents, and a strategy developed to support the child and bring about a change. Establishing the child's security is an important first step.

Parent cooperation is considered very important. Most behavior problems stem from a feeling of insecurity at some level in the child's life. It is important to work together.

At school, we establish the child's security by using clearly defined classroom rules and playground rules **reinforcing these limits consistently** in a loving firm way.

CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE AND GROUND RULES

The teacher shall maintain a very orderly disciplined classroom. The children shall be free to move about, select their own activity, work in groups, or at individual tasks. As long as activity is constructive, it is developmental. The atmosphere of the room shall be quiet, peaceful, and busy. Below are some basic ground rules to help you establish a tranquil classroom, which will assist the child's development.

- Explain the ground rules very clearly to each new child and reinforce them frequently by talking about them with the children.
- Set clear limits, e.g. number of children in the reading corner, easel, etc.
- We always use soft speaking voice in the classroom (make this very special, never raise your own voice).
- Always use a bell when you wish to get the class' attention (Play the bell game to get the children accustomed to this). Wait until you have the attention of all the children , then give a very clear, specific direction, e.g., "Put your work away and come to the line."
- Establish the inviolate rule that once a child has established a work area, no other child is ever permitted to interfere with it or disturb it in his temporary absence.
- Use work mats to define the child's area (Children walk around the mats on the floor, never across them). Once a child selects work and takes it to their table or mat, they should feel free to use it as long as they wish.
- Show the child the correct way things are done in the classroom, e.g., "This is how we carry a chair, tray, basket, etc."
- Never assume that the child knows; once you show how, he becomes secure.
- When you give a child a lesson, invite him to select a table or get a mat. Show him how to carry the activity, use it, and how to put it away. You do it first, and then let him take over and do it himself.
- In group situations, if a child is disruptive, sit that child beside you.
- As a positive way to establish discipline, introduce a Thinking Chair. When there is a problem, talk to the child, make sure he understands, and then send him to the thinking chair to think about his behavior and how he might change it.
- Tell him, "I love you very much, Johnny, but I don't like your behavior right now, so let's work together on changing that. You can sit here and think about how you can change it."
- This approach helps the child take charge of his own life, become responsible, and yet does not damage his self-esteem.
- Never put a child down, criticize him or accuse him. It is very damaging and it takes a lot of work to undo such a negative approach.
- See that the child always has choices; exercising his will builds confidence. If the child cannot handle freedom of choice, limit his choice to two (2). "You may select the peg-board or you may paint."
- The child shall take responsibility for his own cleaning up. Show him how.
- Let the child know that you have a high expectation for him, that you know he can do it. This helps him to strive for perfection and get more satisfaction from his activity.

Basic Rules for Classroom

- Walk in the classroom
- Speak with a soft voice
- Respect other children's work when at their workplace
- Take work only from the shelf, never from someone's workplace
- Work materials must always be replaced in exactly the same place after use
- Say, "Excuse me, please." when someone is in your way, then wait for them to move
- Unroll a mat on the floor before you select your material
- When working on a table, select a mat and unroll it before you bring your tray to the table
- When working with water, put on an apron and close the tabs
- Mats must be rolled and replaced after use
- Work apron must be hung up and returned to its place
- Stop all activity when the bell rings. (Freeze!) Listen as teacher is about to give a direction
- Only one child allowed in reading corner at a time
- Only two children allowed at snack table at a time
- Only one child allowed at easel at a time
- Only one child allowed in bathroom at a time, wear the pass and return it when finished
- Wash hands after using the toilet
- Wash hands before lunch and snack
- Check face and wash after lunch
- Use polite and kind words when talking to other children and teachers
- Select challenging work and ask for help when you need it

DISCIPLINE ON THE PLAYGROUND

Playground rules have been established to ensure consistency and security for our children. They are posted in the playground. They must be reviewed with all the children at least once a week.

- Explain the basic ground rules to the child.
- Explain why we have rules, let the children know that the purpose of the rules is to keep the playground safe so all the children can play and be happy.
- Walk the children around the playground explaining every piece of equipment and how it is to be used.
- Explain every area and what the ground rules are for that area; e.g. the block area, the sand box, the black top wheel toy area.
- Establish how many children may play in a particular area if applicable.
- Explain the disciplinary action that will be taken when a child breaks the rules.
- Establish an area in which you will separate a disruptive child to have him/her think about their behavior.
- Always use the term "thinking time" instead of "time out." Remember, it is one minute for every year of age, e.g. three-year-old - 3 minutes, four-year-old - 4 minutes, five-year-old - 5 minutes.
- Be consistent and firm, yet always kind when disciplining a child.
- Speak one on one to the child when you need to correct behavior. Go to the child, do not yell across the playground.
- Use very precise language - name the behavior you want stopped, e.g. "Do not throw sand." "Do not hit Sammy." "Do not use hurtful words."

- Physical punishment is never to be used to discipline a child and is grounds for dismissal.
- Don't forget to also use words of encouragement and praise when the opportunity presents itself.

PLAYGROUND RULES

The playground should be presented as a place where the children can play and be happy. If there is fighting or unhappiness, you can point out that the child is free to sit down and watch the other children playing.

- SAND: No throwing of sand at any time.
- SLIDE: Slide only feet first and sitting down.
- TOYS: If toys are taken to the playground they must be collected before the children return to the classroom. The children are responsible for putting all toys back. Wheel toys are to be used on the blacktop area only and must be replaced after use.
- TRICYCLES: Point out the stop line. The tricycles must stay only on the blacktop and stop at the line. They may be used only sitting down. Bikes must be parked after each use in the parking area.
- FENCES: Children must not crowd around gates and must never climb on fences. No child is allowed outside the fences to retrieve a ball or for any other reason at any time, except when dismissed to a parent.
- BLACKTOP: The blacktop play area to be used for tricycles and ball play. No water or sand is allowed on the blacktop at any time.
- CLIMBING: Children may not climb on top of the train, or green climbing frame. Children must stay inside the slide platform on the blue deck.
- WATER PLAY: Water play is only permitted in hot weather when carefully supervised. This is done on the grass area when the children are dressed in the appropriate clothes, and the director has given permission.
- CARRYING WATER to the sandbox is not allowed. The Teacher may wet down the sand when necessary.
- SAND TOYS: Sand toys are to be used only in the sandbox. At the end of playtime, all sand toys are returned by the children to the bin provided.
- BROOMS: The brooms are for the children's use. They must be given a presentation on their correct use. They are to be used to keep the blacktop close to the exit and bathroom entry clear of sand and safe. After use they must be hung back on a hook.
- BLOCKS: The blocks are to remain in the block area. Their use must be supervised. The children are responsible to return them to the bin provided after each use.
- SHED: Children must ask permission to take toys, balls, etc. out of the shed. Place a mat on the grass first. Then bring the activity. Return after use.
- DIGGING: Children may dig only in the red sandbox. There should be no digging around the trees or in sand area below cubbies.

Note: All children participate in clean-up of the playground whether they have used a particular toy or not. Foster a game of community sharing and helping one another take pride in the care of their playground.

Reminder to all staff members: Choice and responsibility are offered to our children on the playground just as in the classroom. It is important to reinforce these simple rules **consistently**, review them at least once a week in the classroom throughout the year.

CONCLUSION

This handbook was designed to give you information on the structure, the program, and the operation of our school. We hope it is helpful. It is important for you to know that we take the job of serving you and your child very seriously and we pride ourselves on providing an excellent service. Any suggestions you have to improve any aspect of our school will be appreciated, as good education requires full cooperation between parents and the school.

Write up your suggestions and put them in the box provided. We will make every effort to adapt to any good ideas that will benefit the children.

Thank you for choosing our school.