



**A Parent's Guide to the
Integrated Social Curriculum**

The Social Curriculum Committee
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The Children's School Integrated Social Curriculum

The Children's School Integrated Social Curriculum has been successfully implemented since 1972. Learning, teaching and caring are integrated into the daily school program. The Children's School believes in building a learning community where high social and academic goals are attained. The Integrated Social Curriculum helps children develop social skills such as responsibility, empathy and cooperation. It also encourages children to care about:

- Themselves through building positive self-concepts
- Other people and bring about an awareness of ethnic and cultural diversity through theme teaching and social studies
- The environment through teaching awareness of environmental issues and through the planning of school-wide events

The Integrated Social Curriculum is not taught as a separate entity, but is a part of everything the child does within the school setting. It is included in playground activities, assemblies, and specialty classes (art, physical education, Spanish, music, technology, science and library).

A high priority is placed on the development of the child's personal growth, sense of respect for self and others, and social responsibility to prepare them for continued success in future academic and social endeavors.

A commitment of TIME is required to implement the social curriculum. Learning social skills and nurturing moral growth is a developmental process. It takes time to:

- Develop lifelong characteristics of responsibility and self-discipline
- Be consistent in following through on consequences for inappropriate behaviors
- Help people establish caring behaviors so that they can become contributing members of society
- Allow children to be a part of the decision-making process and to be problem solvers

It is a priority at The Children's School to invest time in helping all members of our community to develop positive social skills.

THE INTEGRATED SOCIAL CURRICULUM PARTNERSHIP

THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The school community includes the faculty, the children, the parents, the staff, the administrators and the Board of Trustees. The way in which all of these groups interact with one another has an effect upon the child.

The teachers are the prime source for implementation of the Social Curriculum. They are the ones who have daily contact with the children over an extended period of time. Teachers model ethical behavior and nurture the child's character in the school setting. They create a class community where the children come to know that the group is valued, the individual is respected, and that each person has a responsibility within the class.

Teachers:

- Establish a safe atmosphere that the child senses through the physical environment and experiences through personal interactions. Because children are active learners, there is time planned for them to converse, work together and move about
- Foster a positive self-image and treat each child as a unique individual with specific strengths and needs
- Respect each child's diversity and understand that each child grows and develops at a different rate
- Encourage growth in responsibility, independence and decision making
- Provide a curriculum that is child-centered and hands-on, taking into account the developmental needs of children, as well as the material to be learned
- View themselves as significant people in the life of the child
- Understand the developmental nature of the social curriculum

THE FAMILY

Parents are vital partners in the Integrated Social Curriculum of The Children's School. The bridge between home and school helps the children to generalize their skills and allows them to practice and put to use all that they know in a variety of settings.

Parents are especially important because they are the child's first role models and this continues throughout their lives. The Children's School Parent and Student Handbook outlines the parents' role and the expectations we hold for our parent community.

The cooperative effort and communication between parent and teachers ensures that we are working as a team in the best interest of each child.

COMPONENTS OF THE SOCIAL CURRICULUM

MORNING & CLOSING MEETINGS

Morning Meetings provide for children's social and academic needs that are crucial to their success in school.

-Northeast Foundation for Children, Greenfield, MA

PURPOSE: To provide a daily educational approach for community building through the teaching and learning of positive social behavior.

Morning Meeting sets the tone for the day. Children learn and practice the social skills necessary for a caring classroom through participation in Morning Meeting. Morning Meeting also provides a way in which the academic and social curriculum are integrated. Morning Meeting times vary from class to class.

Closing Meeting is an opportunity to bring closure to the events of the day. By using a reflective approach, children learn to affirm each other, to be accountable and to appreciate the uniqueness of each individual's contribution.

BUILDING COMMUNITY AND ESTABLISHING CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

Rules imposed by external constraint remain external to the child's spirit. Rules due to mutual respect and cooperation take root inside the child's mind.

-Jean Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child*

PURPOSE: TO involve children in the discussion of classroom expectations necessary for a safe, effective learning environment. To help children intrinsically value ethical standards. To establish an understanding that community is about working together.

A classroom where children feel safe and know that they are respected is a priority at The Children's School. Each year, the students are involved in the process of creating classroom expectations where kindness, respect, cooperation, friendship and joy for learning and working together is experienced. This helps to intrinsically motivate the children to uphold the expectations by giving them a sense of ownership. They also come to know that their expectations have a purpose, which is related to learning how to care for and respect each other.

Communication is an important component of finding resolution when issues arise. Issues and problems are discussed with the children involved and solutions are sought together. The teacher is responsible for facilitating conflict resolution between children.

Playground time offers children opportunities to enhance self-esteem, develop a sense of belonging, learn cooperative skills, identify with a group, and commit to goals, all of which contribute to academic success.

-Marilyn Clayton, Greenfield Center School, MA

School-wide expectations, such as playground expectations, are also expectations, are also established as the year progresses. These are developed through whole-school participation so there is consistency in behavioral standards.

LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

PURPOSE: To help children develop self-discipline and responsibility.

Through the Integrated Social Curriculum, logical consequences are determined in relation to behaviors. The students are treated with respect and dignity. When children experience the consequences of their behavior, the emphasis is on the behavior, not on the character of the child. The focus is on what was learned (mistakes are opportunities to learn), and what to do to change the behavior (finding solutions). The teacher is supportive of the child and uses this opportunity to guide the child toward positive social behaviors and moral understanding. It is important to remember that the consequences can be positive or negative depending upon the behavior choice. For example, when a child uses art supplies carefully and with respect, he/she gets to continue using the materials and enjoy the process of creating his project. Should the child mishandle or misuse the supplies, he/she may inadvertently break a tool or ruin his/her project and as a result, will lose privileges for the next activity

FOSTERING INTERPERSONAL AND INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS

PURPOSE: To help children develop positive social skills for interacting with others. To help children develop and understanding of themselves.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

The primary goal of developing interpersonal skills is to help children interact with the people in their environment in a respectful and positive manner by developing relationships built on trust, communication, integrity and empathy. Ultimately, they develop skills such as cooperation, negotiation, sharing and compromise.

Adults can facilitate the development of these skills by:

- Helping children recognize the feelings of others
- Dealing with hurt feelings and misunderstandings through the use of language
- Providing opportunities for children to develop listening skills, communication skills and leadership skills
- Providing opportunities for group work
- Developing an appreciation for diversity

- Developing an awareness of community through service learning

INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS

By fostering intrapersonal skills, a child develops the ability to understand personal emotions and to use that understanding to develop self-discipline and self-control. This is achieved by helping children become conscious of their own feelings and helping them develop a vocabulary with which to express their feelings. A child needs opportunities to become self-confident, focused and independent.

Adults can facilitate the development of these skills by:

- Modeling how to express emotions (“I’m feeling excited about our trip to the zoo today!”)
- Asking children to identify their feelings (“How do you feel about the work you did today in the garden?”)
- Assisting children in communicating their feelings (“I feel sad when you knock over my block building.”)
- Creating opportunities that allow children to express ideas and opinions
- Encouraging self-reflection & self-assessment
- Modeling that mistakes will happen and they can help us learn
- Providing opportunities to make choices and deal with the consequences of these choices

DEVELOPING INDEPENDENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY

The development of a child’s potential depends on the ability of the teacher to perceive the child’s possibilities.

-Rudolph Dreikurs, *Maintaining Sanity in the Classroom*

PURPOSE: To help children grow in their ability to be independent and responsible learners.

Helping children become independent and responsible learners is a key component of The Integrated Social Curriculum of The Children’s School. Learning becomes more purposeful and motivating because the children are involved in the decision-making process. Being independent and responsible learners leads to a more productive and successful experience in school and beyond.

Adults can facilitate the development of these skills by:

- Setting reasonable expectations for children in relation to their abilities, interests, maturation and developmental levels
- Identifying and reinforcing “have-to jobs” in their lives. “Have-to jobs” are tasks and responsibilities that are non-negotiable. These should be clearly identified and the reasons for the “have-to jobs” should be discussed with the child
- Building self-esteem and confidence by being supportive, through guidance, while resisting the urge to rescue or take over; treating children with respect; taking ideas and

feelings seriously; valuing risk taking and encouraging children to ask questions and to be initiators and problem solvers in their lives

- Creating a trusting atmosphere in which the children feel safe to learn from their mistakes
- Providing children with opportunities to make choices so that they can become self-initiators and develop responsibility for their own learning
- Noticing children's behaviors and actions. Children develop responsible behaviors when they are noticed and the adults respond to their efforts
- Creating opportunities for the children to become responsible leaders by maximizing a cooperative attitude and minimizing a competitive attitude
- Modeling and practicing productive, useful study skills. Working with students to help them learn how to organize their school work, and manage their time

BUILDING SELF-CONFIDENCE

Cooperation leads to autonomy.

*-Jean Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child**

PURPOSE: To help children build their self-confidence through encouragement so they can succeed socially and academically.

When a child hears encouraging words he/she builds positive attitudes towards learning and is influential in promoting the child's self-confidence. The primary goal in the area of building self-confidence is directed toward intrinsic motivation. It is one that allows the children to receive enjoyment and satisfaction from their school work and school experiences.

Adults can facilitate building a child's self-confidence by:

- Using encouraging words
- Focusing on the positive
- Emphasizing cooperation

CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

PURPOSE: To provide an organized classroom that is conducive to children working independently and responsibly To provide a management system that promotes mutual respect and competence.

Helping children understand and learn organization and management skills in an important part of the school's approach to building and reinforcing a sense of autonomy, self-discipline and community. Children need to be informed about how things work in their school setting. The more informed they are, the more secure they will feel, the better choices they will make and the more successful they will be.

Teachers arrange the classroom and their schedule so that children have multiple social experiences. The children are given opportunities and time to allow growth in the socialization process. Building community is a necessary aspect of classroom management and organization. It fosters respect for each other and classroom materials.

Children are expected to:

- Be friendly
- Take turns by sharing space, materials, and private time with each other and the teachers
- Use respectful language when solving conflicts by listening to others' points of view as well as expressing their own
- Be cooperative when playing games, working on projects, or solving problems, in an effort to minimize an attitude of competition
- Take care of their own possessions
- Be responsible for organizing and keeping track of their work
- Care for the equipment and materials in the room, such as computers and books

ASSESSMENT

PURPOSE: To provide measurement tools for assessing children's progress in the social curriculum. Assessment is on-going and includes all aspects of the child's day.

Teachers observe and keep regular anecdotal records of students' interactions in both social and academic settings with adults and other children. The students assess themselves and offer feedback to others through reflections, group discussions and class meetings.

COMMUNICATION

PURPOSE: To establish positive communication between the parent and the school for the social/emotional and academic success of the child.

It is through the home and school working together that the child's learning is maximized. The Children's School believes this is best accomplished by a cooperative effort between the child's home environment and the child's school environment.

Paths of communication with the school include:

- Emails & telephone calls
- Back to School Night
- Conferences & written progress reports
- The Parent Association
- Parent Education Opportunities
- Media: Classroom newsletters, classroom blogs, The Children's School website (www.teslj.org), and the Parent and Student Handbook are other sources of communication

RESOURCES

- *Yardsticks* by Chip Wood
- The Northeast Foundation for Children: Responsive Classroom; Greenfield, MA (www.responsiveclassroom.org)
- Origins: Developmental Designs; Minneapolis, MN (www.originsonline.org)
- International Network for Children and Families; Gainesville, FL (www.incaf.com)
- *Connected Parenting: Set Loving Limits and Build Strong Bonds with Your Child for Life* by Jennifer Kolari
- *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk*, by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish
- *Working in the Reggio Way* by Julianne P. Wurm
- *Me, You, Us: Social-Emotional Learning in Preschool* by Anne Esptein