



GOOD HOPE  
COUNTRY DAY  
SCHOOL

**GOOD HOPE COUNTRY  
DAY SCHOOL**

**EARLY LEARNING CENTER  
HANDBOOK  
2019-20**

## **GOOD HOPE COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT**

Good Hope Country Day School cultivates reflective, creative and compassionate students who are critical thinkers prepared to excel and empowered to better their island and the world.

### **Philosophy of Early Childhood**

The Good Hope Country Day School supports the philosophy of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). We consider ourselves to be a developmental pre-school, addressing the needs of the whole child; academic, social, emotional, and physical. Our goal in the Early Learning Center is to provide the children with a variety of "hands-on" experiences and activities which will enhance their natural readiness for reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and critical thinking skills.

We believe strongly in the importance of play. Research shows that pretend play strengthens cognitive capacities, including sustained attention, memory, logical reasoning, language and literacy skills, imagination, creativity, understanding of emotions, and the ability to reflect on one's own thinking, and take another person's perspective. We try to incorporate play in our specific readiness activities, in addition to giving the children free play time each day.

The Preschool program is designed to prepare our students for success in First Grade and beyond. We have found that children who thrive in this environment are generally between the ages 5.5 to 6.0 years of age at the beginning of Kindergarten and 6.5 to 7.0 of age at the beginning of First Grade.

### **Organization**

The Early Learning Center (ELC) consists of a nursery for three to four year olds, a Pre-Kinder (four to five year olds) and Kindergarten (five to six year olds). Spanish, PE, and Music teachers visit each group once a week for instruction, and students visit the library once a week as well.

### **Daily Schedule**

Arriving to school on time is important to starting the school day on a positive note. The school day starts at 7:50 am; late arrivals are disruptive for the children and the teachers. A teacher is on duty beginning at 7:30 am. Therefore arrival can be between 7:30 and 7:45 am. Parents or guardians MUST stay and supervise children who arrive early. Teachers create a predictable and varied schedule which is shared with parents and posted for children.

## **Getting off to a Good Start**

Regardless of your child's previous school experiences, it is essential that the first few days be as positive as possible. We have carefully designed our curriculum so that all of the children will feel comfortable at school while becoming familiar with their peers, teachers, and physical surroundings. During this time, we plan many large group activities and free playtime. We ask that children not bring any toys to school unless specifically requested for a certain activity.

Emphasis at this time is also placed on helping the children learn to take care of their own materials. This includes carrying and taking care of lunch kits, mats, and classroom materials.

## **OUR APPROACH**

In order for children to thrive in a school setting, we must create a classroom environment that meets their social and emotional needs for belonging, significance, and fun! For children to learn the habits and skills of positive behavior, we teach them how to meet their needs in a cooperative and productive way. This requires us to respond effectively in the moment when misbehavior occurs, and follow through if the misbehavior continues. In dealing with behavioral challenges, we work collaboratively with parents and sometimes seek support from our school therapist, Sasha Marohn. We try to keep in mind that although there are general patterns to children's development, every child grows in his or her own unique way.

### **Social and Emotional Intelligence: The Ruler Approach**

The explicit teaching of social and emotional skills enables children to manage their emotions effectively, become better problem solvers, and develop positive relationships among themselves and with teachers. The overall effect is to create a climate that improves academic performance. The RULER approach, developed at Yale's School of Social and Emotional Development, is rooted in emotional intelligence theory and research on both child and adult development. The focus is on helping parents, educators, and students develop five key skills:

- Recognizing** emotions to obtain valuable information about themselves and their environment
- Understanding** the causes and consequences of emotions to predict behavior
- Labeling** emotions to describe feelings precisely
- Expressing** emotions to communicate effectively and in socially appropriate ways
- Regulating** emotions to promote learning and personal growth, including healthy relationships

There are four anchor tools that provide a common language and set of strategies that integrate into all aspects of learning at school and home.

**The Charter** is a mission statement for the learning and working environment that community members pledge to maintain. The focus is on how each community member wants to feel, what

needs to happen for those feelings to be consistently present and guidelines for maintaining a positive climate.

**The Mood Meter** helps individuals identify their feelings accurately.

**The Meta-Moment** is a process that helps children and adults expand the space between an emotional trigger and a response, learning to respond effectively to challenging emotional experiences with their best selves in mind.

**The Blueprint** helps everyone problem solve effectively.

Using these tools at home and in the classroom can help children and adults learn to self-regulate, build positive relationships, make good decisions, improve teaching practice and academic performance, and promote a positive climate.

## **THE CURRICULUM**

In accordance with the joint position of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, our curriculum is carefully designed to be engaging, developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, and comprehensive. The curriculum builds on children's prior background knowledge, physical well-being, fine and gross motor development, and individual approaches to learning. Subjects include literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, and the arts.

### **Language and Literacy Development**

Oral language is the foundation for literacy learning - the role of language development in children's emotional development is significant. Children who have the language needed to identify, understand and respond to their own and others' emotions have more positive relationships with others.

Teachers enrich and extend children's inherent interest in language through attentive listening and good extended conversations, intentionally introducing new words, reading books aloud and discussing them in large and small groups, and providing literacy materials, such as books and writing materials in the classroom.

A strong predictor of reading success is phonological awareness, that is noticing the sounds of spoken language, beginning speech sounds and rhythms, rhyme and other sound similarities, and at the highest level, syllables and phonemes (the smallest units of speech that make a difference in communication). Most children do not automatically acquire phonemic awareness, but they gain this when teachers engage children in a range of activities that promote awareness of the sounds of language through rhyming games, songs, and chant rhymes. In all such practices, teachers keep alphabet learning fun and meaningful.

At the most fundamental level, the ability to read and write depends on mastering the alphabetic principle – that there is a systematic relationship between letters and sounds, and that all spoken sounds and words can be represented by a limited set of symbols called letters. In the preschool years, teachers introduce the alphabet to children in many contexts. For example,

the teacher may incorporate letter knowledge into transitions (If your name starts with B, you may get your lunch kit!)

### *Phonics and Spelling*

In Nursery the teacher encourages children to become attuned to perceiving distinct sounds in order to prepare them to perceive distinct letter sounds. Pre-K to third graders learn to read and spell through Foundations, a multisensory phonics, spelling and handwriting program that makes learning to read fun while laying the groundwork for lifelong literacy. By the end of Pre-K, most children know the alphabet and can spell three letter words. In Kindergarten, students learn to recognize, manipulate, and decode simple and complex sounds, then words, and how words fit into sentences. Students learn the spelling rules and concepts that are the basis of the English language. They learn why words are spelled the way they are, instead of memorizing lists of words. (Students will still memorize those trick words that don't follow the rules).

### *Reading*

Classrooms libraries include a wide range of fiction and non-fiction; classes also visit the school library where Mrs. Bishop reads to children and helps them select books to read independently. An essential component of a strong Language Arts program involves daily reading at home. A parent reading to a child supports a love of reading; a child reading aloud to a parent builds fluency. Community and love of reading is also supported through our Reading Buddies program, in which students of different ages come together once a week to read together.

In addition to rich classroom libraries, kindergarten to third grade teachers make use of Fountas and Pinnell leveled readers, which are rooted in the understanding that when a text poses the appropriate challenge, the child has opportunities with effective, explicit teaching to build his or her network of effective problem solving actions. With daily teaching, the teacher helps the child climb the ladder of text difficulty with success. By the end of Kindergarten, children should be independently reading simple stories at varied levels.

### *Writing*

In Pre-Kindergarten children become familiar with correct letter formation and engage in daily practice of writing letters, can write their names using upper and lower case letters, and can dictate stories to the teacher.

The Units of Study Writing Program, developed by Lucy Calkins at Columbia Teachers College, provides the foundation of the writing program from kindergarten to eighth grade.

The essential aspects of the program are that

- Writing needs to be taught with explicit instruction.
- Children deserve to write for real, to write the kinds of texts that they see in the world.

- Children need to be immersed in a listening and storytelling culture where their voices are valued and heard.
- Children need explicit instruction in spelling and phonemic awareness. In addition to Foundations, used through grade Three, there is a scope and sequence for spelling and grammar instruction from first to eighth grade.
- Writers read! For children to write well, they need opportunities to read, to hear texts read, and to read as insiders, studying what other authors have done that they too could try.
- Children need clear goals and feedback.

In the Units of Study program, each grade level includes units of writing with some combination of the following: narrative, opinion/persuasive/ argument, and informational. Instruction builds on itself from one year to the next. Teaching follows the gradual release of responsibility model of teaching. Students can first learn from a demonstration, accompanied by explicit teaching, then from guided practice in which the amount of scaffolding they receive lessens over time.

## **Mathematics**

The goal of our mathematics program is to help children construct mathematical knowledge through meaningful learning experiences. Students solve problems, develop sound reasoning, and communicate their mathematical thinking in written and oral forms. They make connections to mathematical ideas and real-life experiences, and explore multiple representations. We encourage children's interest in mathematics while building their confidence and strengthening their skills. We see mathematics as an integral part of the children's learning experiences at school and home.

The Bridges K to 5 Math curriculum is a rigorous program that focuses on developing students' deep understandings of mathematical concepts, proficiency with key skills, and ability to solve complex and novel problems. Seeing, touching, and sketching ideas create pictures in the mind's eye, helping learners construct, understand, and apply mathematical ideas. Bridges incorporates increasingly complex visual models, including the Number Line and the Array models, in a coherent framework across the curriculum. Bridges blends direct instruction, structured investigation, and open exploration. It taps into the intelligence and strengths of all students by presenting material that is as linguistically, visually, and kinesthetically rich as it is mathematically powerful.

## **Social Studies**

Social interactions among children are central to the curriculum. Our goal is to enable children to work and play together in a respectful and cooperative way. The curriculum is organized into broad topics of study connected to children's lives and integrated with other learning domains. Teachers foster children's understanding of democratic processes and attitudes in experiential ways that children are able to understand, such as making and discussing rules, solving together the problems that arise in the classroom community, and learning to listen to others' ideas and perspectives. Parents and other guests are frequently invited into the classroom to make connections between the curriculum, family and local community

## **Science**

Small children are natural scientists and engineers. Their days are filled with opportunities to build, take apart, sort, observe, compare, question, and experiment. In Nursery, teachers focus on children's natural curiosity about the world around them to emphasize inquiry in science experiences. Children are encouraged to observe and to ask questions about the natural world and to think about what might happen during various scientific processes. The Pre-K curriculum includes explorations in life science, physical science, earth/ space science, and engineering. Teachers use a variety of strategies to help children develop important scientific concepts and skills. As part of science and social studies, students often take walks around campus to collect leaves, develop their observational skills, and visit different places around the campus.

## **Music**

In the Early Learning Center children explore the world of sound around them by listening to tones with pitch or no pitch along with the sounds of instruments, voices, and voices in nature. Children are encouraged to use their voices to imitate the sounds of animal voices, to repeat rhythm or tonal patterns, and to sing simple songs. Folk songs from many cultures are sung along with songs from our West Indian heritage. Rhythm instruments such as sticks, drums, tambourines, triangles, and woodblocks are played to develop a steady beat progressing to echoing rhythm patterns that are heard. Traditional circle games are played to encourage the development of good classroom manners such as waiting for turns and following directions while learning to listen closely to music, stories, songs, and poetry.

## **Visual Arts**

Art exploration is an integral segment of the Early Learning experience. A wide variety of art media, such as watercolors, dough, recycled materials, felt, foam, tempera paint, and embellishments are provided for the children to use to help develop self-expression, experimentation, and art appreciation. Children are encouraged to learn about and practice a wide variety of art techniques through both free art exploration and structured lessons. Teachers integrate many art activities into the rich curriculum which provides subject matter for much of the children's work. Art is a hands-on activity which helps children develop fine motor skills, creativity, and a deep appreciation of art.

## **Cooking**

Early Learning Center teachers often involve students in cooking projects which integrate language, math, and science concepts. Cooking together develops community, teaches good manners, and promotes a healthy life-style.

## **Physical Education and Swimming**

In the Early Learning Center we focus on physical development through play. Fundamental movements such as hopping, skipping, jumping, leaping, and galloping are taught and reinforced with games. We also incorporate sports skills such as batting, ball bouncing, kicking, catching, and throwing. Life skills such as rule following and managing personal space are part of each lesson, and are also encouraged during games.

Children have swimming instruction on Fridays. They are encouraged, though not forced, to swim. Depending upon the number of students, children go to the pool in two or three small groups. Swimming instruction is provided by the PE Staff who are all qualified swimming instructors. Instruction is based on each student's skill level and comfort in the water.

If your child is swimming, please have him/her wear a swimsuit to school under regular clothing and bring a towel and dry underwear. Please mark swim suits, towels, and underwear with your child's name. For ease of changing, we ask that children wear shorts or dresses on swim days – not long pants.

## **Rest Time**

Rest is important for brain development and self regulation. For this reason, the Department of Human Services states in its rules and regulations that all preschool children must be given the opportunity to rest at least one-hour every day. Some children may not sleep, but they rest quietly. Teachers take advantage of rest time to work individually with students.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Assessment is done for four purposes: planning and adapting curriculum to meet each child's developmental and learning needs, helping teachers and families monitor children's progress, evaluating and improving teaching effectiveness, and screening children for unique learning needs. When assessment identifies the possibility of a special learning need, appropriate referral to a specialist for diagnostic follow up or other intervention occurs.

Assessment addresses key goals in all developmental domains: physical, social, emotional, and cognitive.

Assessment is systematic, ongoing and integrated with teaching – including teachers' observations of what children say and do during center time, play, projects, discussion, and other learning experiences. Teachers and families share information in ways that are clear, respectful, and constructive

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **Language Learning Support**

The Language Learning Center at Good Hope Country Day School is pleased to have an Orton-Gillingham Fellow and an associate level Orton Gillingham practitioner on the faculty and to be able to offer individualized and small group Orton-Gillingham based tutorial support. This means instruction is multisensory, diagnostic and prescriptive, direct, explicit, structured, and sequential. The approach is cognitive and based on research about brain function and the most effective teaching and learning principles and practices.

Learners are taught the structure of language following a sequence designed to move from the most fundamental concepts to the more complex. Attention is given to the phonemic, syllabic, morphemic, and grammatical structures of the language.

Individuals appropriate for the program are those diagnosed with a language-based learning disability such as dyslexia, or as determined by an assessment conducted by our educational diagnostician. A psycho-educational evaluation may be requested and required to be shared if there is question about whether our language learning program is appropriate for a student. Cognitive abilities of those diagnosed with language-based learning disabilities must yield average potential. Our program is not designed to meet the needs of students who have learning difficulties that are the result of primary emotional or behavioral problems, below average cognitive ability, Pervasive Developmental or Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Referral Process: A teacher or parent can request a referral. Ms. Canning will work collaboratively with the parent and teacher to determine whether the referral is appropriate. Approximately five hours are required for assessment and synthesis of information, so parents and teachers should expect about three weeks depending upon the time of year. Once the assessment is completed, a meeting will be held with parent, teacher, and administrator to share the findings and develop a plan. Capacity is limited, and a skills assessment does not guarantee a place in the learning center.

### **Counseling Services**

Positive social and emotional development in the preschool years provides an essential foundation for cognitive and academic competence, not only in preschool but also in later years. Early childhood educators recognize that these aspects of development must be given the same level of focused attention and planning as is given to children's literacy development or their understanding of mathematical concepts.

Children deal with a wide range of issues as they journey through childhood; they are searching for a place within their peer group, and they want to be successful. In many cases the classroom teacher can help students deal with individual issues, but sometimes more help is needed. If a teacher feels that a student needs extra support, she will contact the parent to

discuss the particular concern and perhaps suggest that the student meet with the counselor, Ms. Sasha Marohn. If the parent agrees, Ms. Marohn will initiate contact with the parent before meeting with the student. Ms. Marohn may meet with the parent and child first.

It is important that students do not see “visiting” Ms. Marohn as a punishment or an indication that they are not normal. We go to the dentist to have our teeth cleaned; we go to the chiropractor to have an adjustment; we go to the eye doctor to get glasses; we go to the therapist because he or she is trained to help us approach social and or emotional problems in a productive manner. Ms. Marohn often meets students a few times to help them work through particular problems. If she feels that the student needs more regular and long-term support, she may meet with the student more frequently, or refer the student to another professional. Parents may also refer their child to meet with Mrs. Marohn. They may speak directly to a teacher, or contact Ms. Marohn by phone or e-mail (smarohn@ghcde.org).

## **PARENT CONFERENCES**

GHCDs encourages communication between teachers and parents. Although impromptu conferences prior to the beginning of a school day are discouraged, please feel free to call to arrange a convenient time to observe or have a conference. Teachers are usually available every day after school for informal discussions, and messages can be left on voice-mail at any time. (Preschool phone extensions are 2202, 2203, 2204)

Formal Conferences: Formal conferences for all Pre-School students are scheduled on November 1. Teachers are available to schedule conferences at mutually convenient times throughout the school year.

## **DAY TO DAY DETAILS**

### **Dress**

Students should appear clean and neat when they arrive at school. For safety reasons, Preschool children must wear shoes, preferably tennis shoes (sneakers), at all times. When sandals are worn, they MUST have straps and/or buckles. FLIP-FLOPS or SLIP ON SANDALS are unsafe. P.E. shirts and shorts are not required but may be purchased from the Office. Each child in the Preschool must bring a change of clothes (shorts, shirt, dress, underwear, and socks all labeled with his/her name) to school. They will be kept in cubbies all year in case of a spill or an accident.

### **Snack and Lunch**

Your child will need a snack and lunch every day. We suggest well-balanced foods with fruit for dessert. (Please NO sodas or candies.) When days are hot, two (maybe three) drinks will be

needed. Drinking water, of course, is always available. Please mark your child's name on his/her lunch kit.

We realize that making a lunch for your child can be a chore, but preparing an adequate, nutritious, and appetizing lunch for your child is one of the greatest expressions of love a parent can make.

## **Transportation**

Teachers must know how each child is to get home from school and who is permitted to pick him/her up after school. Children who go home at the end of the school day should be picked up at the Preschool building between 2:45 and 3:00. (Charges for After School Care begin at 3:15.) Teachers make sure that children get on the correct bus. Any change in transportation should be confirmed in writing or by telephone. This includes pick-up by adults other than the child's parents. The phone extensions in our Preschool are 2202, 2203 and 2204. Teachers will not accept a verbal communication from a preschool student or a sibling under the age of 10. Please understand that your child's safety is our primary concern.

## **Health and Wellbeing**

Preschool children are required by the Department of Human Services to have a yearly physical. On our physical form, parents are asked for permission to dispense over the counter medications such as Tylenol, Tums, and cough drops. When a child feels sick he/she is taken to the school nurse (phone extension 2109), who makes an assessment and treats the child. Depending on her assessment, she will call the parents, send a note, or discuss with the teachers. When your child is sick, we do ask that you call the school in the morning to inform the teachers and the nurse. Doctor prescribed antibiotics can be left with the nurse to administer during the day.

Minor injuries at school are treated with ice, antibiotic ointments, and band-aids. Parents are notified immediately of any serious injuries.

## **SPECIAL EVENTS**

**Birthdays:** We have one birthday party per month (usually the last Friday of the month) for all children who have a birthday in that particular month. We will ask for contributions for refreshments (cupcakes) in advance of the celebration. In addition to this, each child will receive special recognition on his/her birthday.

**Holidays:** Often a special event is planned at school to recognize a holiday. We encourage sensitivity to the diversity of culture, heritage, and religious affiliations represented within the class. Information regarding special events will be included in newsletters sent regularly. These plans often center on the preparation of special food at school.

## **AFTER SCHOOL PICK-UP**

Parents who plan to pick up their children after school are requested to observe the following guidelines:

- A. If you plan to pick up your child before 3:15, please park in the lower parking area and come to the Preschool building for your child. (The upper level parking lot is filled with school buses and pick-up traffic. It is not an appropriate place to park and leave your vehicle.)
- B. If you plan to pick up your child after the buses have left the school, you may park directly in the upper level parking lot and come in for your child. It is important that your child be picked up by 3:15 unless he/she will be staying for After School Care.
- C. Please DO NOT park in the "off-limits" areas painted along the road next to the Preschool building as this is a widely used crossing area; this is especially true for the crosswalk extending from the Preschool patio gate leading to the parking lot stairs. Please park in the Lower Parking lot.

Please note that while the Preschool staff is supportive of a child's after school activities, such as swimming, soccer, and dance, they cannot always be counted on to remember an individual's schedule or change of dress needs. These extra and special activities are the responsibility of the parents to organize and arrange.

## **AFTER SCHOOL CARE**

Good Hope Country Day School provides after school care and supervision from 3:15 to 5:30. Preschool children stay in their building, and the cost is \$5.00 per hour. All children who are present at 3:15 will be signed in to After School Care. The Business Office sends monthly statements home. Please feel free to speak to administrators, teachers, or Preschool staff for further details.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT AFTER SCHOOL CARE ENDS AT 5:30 PM. THERE WILL BE AN ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF \$1.00 PER MINUTE FOR EACH CHILD WHO IS LEFT IN AFTER CARE BEYOND 5:30. YOUR COOPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING ARE APPRECIATED.**

## **PARENTS' ASSOCIATION**

Good Hope Country Day School has an active parents' association. Information about this association is distributed on Parents' Afternoon in October and is always available from the school office.