



*We Play to Learn*

# **VALLEY VIEW**

## **Early Learning Center**

# **FAMILY HANDBOOK**



**CATALINA FOOTHILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Dear Partners in Education,

Valley View was founded in 1988 and has been carefully planned to provide a quality preschool education for the Catalina Foothills School District. A volunteer committee of district parents and teachers came together with a shared philosophy of child-centered education and developed our program. We continually strive to use developmentally appropriate goals for young children as a framework for planning our educational program and assessing children's progress in all aspects of the social, cognitive, and physical foundations necessary for success in primary schooling. We emphasize diversity throughout our program, and our individualized, developmental approach lends itself to meeting the unique needs of children. We offer model full-day and half-day programs for children 2.5 – 5 years of age, including a Spanish Immersion and Mandarin Chinese Immersion programs taught by native speakers. Our programs run from August to May and follow the Catalina Foothills District Calendar.

We invite each VVELC family to become actively involved in all aspects of our mission. As prospective families, you gain basic familiarity with our philosophy, staff, programs for children, and our approach to meeting learning goals. The purpose of this Family Handbook is to provide an organized source of detailed information specifically related to the ways that families can partner with the school to ensure a high-quality experience for all of the learners at VVELC. We provide this handbook in conjunction with a parent orientation. Please have all of your children's primary caregivers (e.g., extended family, nannies, etc.) review the handbook and other materials regularly.

We are committed to providing children with a quality foundation that will enable them to grow and develop in the years ahead. It is my hope that this year is a valuable learning experience for you and your child. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to call or stop by the office and I will be happy to assist you.

As your interests and schedule permit, please respond to our varied offers to become involved in learning at Valley View Early Learning Center. We look forward to collaborating with you.

On behalf of the Valley View Staff,

Jennifer Dooley, Principal

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## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Our Early Learning Center is committed to being a child-centered developmentally appropriate program that provides for all areas of the child's development; the physical, the social, the emotional and the cognitive, through an integrated approach.

## **EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY**

The philosophy of Valley View Early Learning Center embraces the belief that both the child's personality, interests, and the environment play an equal role in shaping his or her development. We believe that children learn best through developmentally appropriate practices in an inclusive setting when they are allowed to actively interact with the environment, are given many opportunities to make choices and decisions, and develop skills through communication and play with others. We believe that children learn best:

- By exploring concepts through hands-on activities
- Through long blocks of uninterrupted play
- From opportunities to explore both outside and inside
- When they have a caring, respectful relationship with peers and adults
- In an atmosphere that celebrates the joy of everyday life
- With exposure to activities and experiences that are culturally relevant in their daily lives

Valley View Early Learning Center's approach to preschool education is based on theories and research in child development, together with years of educational practice. Our approach is also aligned with the guidelines set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for developmentally appropriate practice.

### **Goals -> Program -> Assessment**

We use our developmental goals as a systematic framework for focusing our program and assessment design. Our teachers are well versed in a wide variety of educational approaches, and we choose teaching strategies, daily routines, classroom arrangements, and curriculum structures that will encourage each child's development. Teacher observations and documentation of individual development are used to adjust the program to better challenge individual development, as well as to conference with parents about ways we can work as a team to support each child.

Our program is strengthened by our relationship with Catalina Foothills School District and its Special Education Department. Valley View is an inclusion preschool where a mutually beneficial relationship is developed between typically developing children and children with special needs. The Special Education Department provides appropriate staff and services to children who qualify for special education.

## ATTENDING VALLEY VIEW EARLY LEARNING CENTER

Children must be three years old by February 1, 2020 to enroll at Valley View Early Learning Center and must be toilet-trained. We do not allow children to wear pull-ups or diapers to school. The Special Education Department may make exceptions based on a child's developmental delays.

### Registration

Each December, currently enrolled children and their siblings have the first opportunity to enroll in a class for the following year. Registration information, including when and how to register will be made available. In an effort to maintain continuity of care, our classrooms are mixed-age (3-, 4- and 5-year olds) and children are grouped by schedule (1/2 day, 3/4 day, full day). This helps children to build stronger attachments to teaching staff that encourages development in all domains. Each family signs an enrollment agreement that contains our fees and refund policies. Please be sure you have read this carefully.

### Required Paperwork

Before your child can begin school, the following paperwork must be completed and turned in to the office.

- Blue Emergency Card
- Current Immunization Records (or exemption forms)
- Medical Action Plan if needed (prescribed medication turned into the office)
- Parent Involvement Form
- Background Information Form
- District Online Registration
- Photocopy of Birth Certificate or Passport

### Tuition

At Valley View Early Learning Center (VVELC), our expenses are budgeted for the entire school year at a fixed rate. Tuition, including fees for extended sessions, is paid on a monthly basis and is due on the first of each month. We do not accept cash. Payment can be made in one of the following methods:

- Check or money order made payable to **CFSD Community Schools** and left in the tuition box at the reception desk.
- Credit Card (MasterCard, Visa or Discover) by login to your Community schools account. Automatic payment can be set up for your convenience.

## **Refund Policy**

It is our policy not to offer refunds during the school year. All fees and tuition are non-refundable. Tuition will not be reduced for days missed or when school is closed.

**Refunds are not given if you withdraw your child during the month or for any reason.**

### **Additional Fees:**

Lunch Bunch: Children in ½ day classes can stay and eat lunch with their friends each day from 11:30-1:30pm. This extended time is available for a limited number of children. Families may sign their children up for this time on the registration form, or on an as needed basis if space permits. Please see the school secretary for details. Children bring a non-refrigerated lunch and drink and stay for eating and playing outdoors and enrichment activities under the supervision of teaching staff. Lunch boxes and water bottles should be labeled. Use a cold pack as needed. The fee is \$14.00/day. Refunds and adjustments will not be made for absences or school holidays.

Extended Sessions: VVELC also offers additional hours in the morning before school from 7:00-9:00am and in the afternoon from 2:30-6:00pm. You may sign up for extended sessions on the registration form or through login into your Community Schools account and accessing the C.A.R.E sign up calendar on an as needed basis if space permits. Please see the office coordinator for details or assistance. The fee for Extended Sessions is \$7.00/hour.

### Registration Fee:

A seventy-five dollar (\$75) registration fee is required to reserve a child's space in our program. This deposit must be submitted with a complete set of enrollment forms to the school secretary in order to reserve a child's space. The registration fee is non-refundable. After April 1<sup>st</sup>, the first month's (August) tuition is also due in order to secure your space at VVELC. This first month's tuition is also non-refundable.

### Late Payment Fee:

A late settlement fee of \$25 may be assessed for all financial settlements made after the fifth day of the month. After the next ten days, an additional \$10 late fee will be assessed each class day to a maximum of \$250.

### Extended Hour Drop-in and Unscheduled Attendance Fee:

Unscheduled attendance occurs when a child changes their current extended hour needs. Notification of changes should be communicated to the front office by the end of day on the Thursday prior to the week of change. Drop-in attendance is subject to the \$7.50 late schedule/payment fee plus your hours of usage if not notified by the Thursday deadline. Please know that staffing is determined by student attendance.

#### Late Pick Up from Classroom Fees:

Late pick-ups are a great inconvenience for staff. **Families who pick up children more than 10 minutes after their scheduled class dismissal time will be charged \$2 per minute.** If you know ahead of time that you will be late, please let us know. Late fees are charged to offset the cost of keeping staff late and will hopefully serve to encourage parents to come on time. Our goal is to discourage late pick-ups rather than to offer expensive late childcare. If a family continues to arrive late to pick up their child, the child's continued enrollment at VVELC will be in jeopardy.

#### Late Pick Up from C.A.R.E Fees:

The C.A.R.E program closes at 6:00 pm. All children are expected to be picked-up by a parent or authorized guardian by 6:00 pm. **If a parent/guardian arrives after 6:00 pm, they will be charged the designated late fee of \$2 per minute.** Emergency contacts (on the blue card) will be called if our staff is not notified ahead of time of late pick-up. There will be no exceptions or warnings. If a parent/guardian is late for whatever reason (flat tire, heavy traffic, weather conditions, etc.) a late charge will be issued. A "no-exceptions" policy makes it easier to apply the late policy to everyone consistently and fairly.

### **Pick Up/Drop Off Policies**

Children must be signed in with a signature upon arrival and signed out upon departure. Please make contact with the teaching staff for your child's safety. A child's parent(s) and/or guardian(s) must provide a list of adults to whom the child can be released. Parents can only be excluded when a court of competent jurisdiction has limited the parental right of access to the child and a copy of the order is on file at the facility.

When in the classrooms, remain as unobtrusive as possible, making every effort not to disrupt the activity in progress. Children's behavior is often significantly affected by a parent's presence. In addition, repeated reunions and separations can be difficult for young children, especially at the beginning of the year.

### **Late Pick Up Procedure**

If you know you are running late, please contact your child's C.A.R.E classroom at 209-7668 if after 4 pm and let them know the anticipated time of pick-up. It is helpful for teachers to know in advance so they can help your child adjust to the late departure. It also helps the teacher plan for staff coverage during the minutes the child is remaining in the program. If there is more than one child remaining past 6:00 pm, we may combine the remaining children to one group. If a child is moved to a different area of the school a note will be posted on the outside of the site's door indicating the location of pick-up. The child's belongings will be with the child at the pick-up point. If a parent

has not contacted the Site Manager by 6:05pm, the Site Manager will follow the protocol below:

1. First the parent/legal guardian will be called.
2. If the parent/legal guardian cannot be reached, we will call the child's authorized emergency contact list. We will continue to attempt contact with the parent/legal guardian and/or authorized emergency contacts until 7:00pm.
3. If by 7:00pm, we are still not able to reach any parent/legal guardian and/or an authorized emergency contact, we will call Arizona Department of Child Safety and/or the local sheriff's department.
  - Arizona Department of Child Safety can be reached at 1-888-767-2445
  - Local Sheriff's Department can be reached at 520-351-4600

Parents must sign out their child with the accurate time of pick-up. Pick-up time is determined from the program's clock setting. The accounts manager will include the late fee(s) in the next tuition billing cycle when late fee payments are expected to be paid.

If you are having consistent difficulties in picking up your child by 6:00pm, please talk to the principal or the C.A.R.E. main office to help you find resources to assist in finding solutions for prompt departures. Consistent late pick-ups without significant communication may lead to dismissal from the program.

### **Withdrawal Policy**

If you no longer need VVELC services for your child, please call the school office at 209-7650. We will remove your child from the attendance schedule and notify the teacher. We will also need you to complete an official District Withdrawal form. *Please note that there are no refunds for partial months of attendance.*

### **Termination Policy**

Valley View Early Learning Center may terminate the enrollment and enforce the withdrawal of any child at any time due to delinquent payment, ill health, consistent behavior problems without requested child guidance evaluation being completed, parent dissatisfaction, and any other problems in accordance with the VVELC Family and Staff Handbooks, or as necessary and determined by the Principal of the school.

## School Hours

Valley View Early Learning Center is open from 7:00am to 6:00pm. We offer 3 half-day classes from 8:30am-11:30pm, 11 full day classes from 8:30am - 2:30pm and 9am-3pm in addition to morning and afternoon extended care. The classes are as follows:

Room 1	Multi-Age	8:30 - 2:30
Room 2	Spanish Immersion	9:00 - 3:00
Room 3	Multi-Age/Lunch Bunch	8:30 - 11:30/11:30-1:30
Room 4	Multi-Age/Lunch Bunch	8:30 - 11:30/11:30-1:30
Room 5	Multi-Age	9:00 - 3:00
Room 6	Young 3s	9:00 - 3:00
Room 7	Young 3s	8:30 - 11:30/8:30 - 2:30
Room 8	Multi-Age	8:30 - 2:30
Room 9	Multi-Age	9:00 - 3:00
Room 10	Spanish Immersion	8:30 - 2:30
Room 11	Spanish Immersion	8:30 - 2:30
Room 12	Multi-Age/Enrichment	8:30 - 11:30/12:30-2:00
Room 13	Spanish Immersion	9:00 - 3:00
Room 14	Mandarin Immersion	9:00 - 3:00

## ORIENTATION FOR CHILDREN

The entry process is carefully planned to make the children's first days of school as reassuring as possible. The child's first school experience is a visit to the classroom with a parent or caregiver to become familiar with the space, the teacher, and begin to meet other members of the school community. After that, the regular school schedule begins. Parents should plan to be available during these days in case the child is not yet ready to separate. Parents and teachers may collaborate on alternate plans for children whose separation requires a more individualized approach. For children who start school at other points during the year, we develop a plan to help them adapt as quickly as possible.

Entering a pre-kindergarten program is a big step for most children, and each child handles it differently. Some children come eagerly the first day of school and continue to make an easy transition into school. Others may feel hesitant at first but quickly become comfortable. Still other children may hesitate and take more time to get comfortable. It is also possible for a child to come eagerly for a few days or weeks, and then, when realizing that school is permanent, begin to have difficulty coming to school. We acknowledge that each child's style in adjusting to school is unique and we provide the support needed for a happy adjustment.

Throughout the year, it is important for the children to arrive promptly so that they can participate fully in the day's activities. The start of the day often affects the child's whole experience. Being picked up on time is equally important. Young children need

the security of knowing that they, too, will be picked up when the other children are going home. For this and reasons related to staffing, picking up your child on time is essential.

Children will not be allowed to leave the school with unauthorized adults. Be sure to inform the front office staff and the teacher of changes in your dismissal arrangements. Anyone new picking up your child will need to check in at the front office and present an ID for verification of their name on the list of people that parents/guardians give consent to pick up their children.

If you pick up your child after 4:30pm, please enter through the door west of the main entrance. Teachers in afternoon extended care will be happy to admit you from this entrance. There is a video doorbell connected to Room 3.

## **ROUTINES AND TRANSITIONS**

### The Preschool Day

*Greeting:* Teachers greet each child as they enter the classroom.

*Settling In:* After following the arrival routine, children choose from a variety of activity centers and play areas in their classrooms.

*Circle Time:* Children meet as a classroom community with their teacher to discuss the school day and learn about key concepts related to a central topic. Opportunities for language acquisition, concept and vocabulary development are provided.

*Activity Time:* Children choose from a range of independent and/or teacher-directed activities from a variety of areas such as: art, blocks, computers, cooking, dramatic play, games, writing center, sensory tables, puzzles and other manipulatives.

*Group Time:* Children meet with their teachers for bathroom, snack, and story time. Each teacher also plans music, movement, and other skill building activities to target specific developmental needs of the group.

*Outdoor Time:* Children go outside every day except in extreme weather conditions including rainy weather. Children choose from a wide variety of activities including sand play, tricycle riding, dramatic play, nature exploration, gardening, climbing, sliding, and other large motor games, as well as art, reading/writing and music/movement.

*Dismissal:* Teachers conduct a closing circle and will signal the parents that they may come in to get their children.

NOTE: Specific classroom schedules can be found posted on the information board by the entrance door to the classroom. Teachers will provide detailed information about the classroom schedule at the Curriculum/Back to School Parent Night each Fall.

## **Extended Day Programs**

The extended day programs begin at the beginning and end of the children's regular program. The extended program is tailored to meet the needs of the children in the group. Many children have long days and prefer a personal program in the morning and a less structured program in the afternoons.

## **Snack**

Snack is prepared by an Assistant Teacher, who has a Pima County Health Department Food Handler's Card, following the AZDHS guidelines for snacks to ensure adequate nutrition is provided. The snack menu is posted in the kitchen and on the small bulletin board inside each classroom. Our snacks are served "family-style" where teaching staff and other adults sit and eat with the children while engaging them in conversation. Children work on social interaction and manners. Children are encouraged to try new foods, but never forced to eat anything. We allow children to self-determine the right amount of food to eat, which promotes healthy eating habits. We never use food as a reward for good behavior.

## **Lunch**

We encourage parents to send healthy goods to school for lunches. Ideally, a lunchbox should contain a protein food (turkey, ham, tuna, peanut butter), a whole-grain food (bread, crackers), a fruit, a vegetable and milk or water to drink. We discourage parents from sending chips, soda, sweetened beverages, candy, or sweet treats (e.g., Twinkies, cupcakes...).

## **Food Brought From Home**

Families provide lunches in labeled lunchboxes for children participating in lunch bunch and full day programs. The school does not have space for refrigerating children's lunches, so please use cold packs or a frozen juice box to keep items at appropriately safe temperatures until lunchtime.

Food brought from home for sharing among children must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers. Because of these restrictions and the high frequency of food allergies, we typically prepare special snacks at school. Families of children with special dietary restrictions should consult with administrators to develop an individualized plan.

## **Naps/Rest Time**

Naps/Rest Time is a regular part of our full day program, though children who have outgrown a nap are able to participate in activities in the classroom while the children who still nap sleep in another classroom.

## **The Child's Belongings**

For your child's safety, dress your child with proper shoes - sturdy, closed-toe, rubber-soled shoes (no flip-flops). For your convenience, please choose washable clothes. Send an extra change of clothing for your child on the first day of school in case a child's clothes become wet or soiled. Please include shirt, shorts/pants, socks, and underwear and **label all clothes** with your child's name. Remember to update this extra set as the weather changes and as your child grows!

Provide adequate outer clothing for your child and label all items. We spend time outside every day, except in pouring rain or in environmental conditions that pose a health hazard, such as severe heat or air pollution.

We prefer that your child leave toys or things that are breakable at home. These often are mislaid and/or picked up by other children, causing upsets and disagreements that could have been avoided.

Children play hard and need enough fluid to stay well hydrated. Thirst is not always a good indicator of the need for fluid. Children may already be dehydrated by the time they are thirsty. Therefore, we will have drinking water available at all times, both indoors and outdoors for children. In accordance with Arizona's Empower Program, staff will offer 4 water breaks throughout the day, actively encouraging children to drink. Water will be the beverage of choice for rehydrating children. We discourage the use of sugar-sweetened beverage to quench thirst and encourage parents to send a water bottle labeled with the child's name to school each day.

## **The Child's Siblings**

Our staffing is set for the number of children in each class, and the classroom arrangement, materials, and routines fit the developmental level of the class. For all of these reasons, we cannot accommodate family requests for children's siblings to join in classroom or outdoor activities. Siblings may accompany a parent or other caregiver to the classroom at greeting or dismissal time.

We schedule evening events during the year, such as the Trunk or Treat Event and Pajama Night, for families to attend together. Also, Family Faculty Organization (FFO) events are usually designed for the entire family.

For parent meetings and conferences that involve the whole staff, we have neither the space nor the staff to provide childcare. Please make other arrangements for all of your children during these events so that all staff and adult family members can give their full attention to discussing our important partnership.

## **HOLIDAYS AND BIRTHDAYS**

At Valley View Early Learning Center, our curriculum is based on the interests of the children and not around calendar events. During the holiday season, VVELC maintains a policy of neutrality. We do not celebrate holidays within the school day. Each school day is a regular, predictable day. Conversations about the holidays may come up among the children in the classroom. However, these conversations are child initiated and not teacher directed. If VVELC has an activity at the school site that coordinates with a holiday, such as Trunk or Treat, it is scheduled as an optional event families may choose to attend.

As part of our emphasis on family identity and respect for diversity, we encourage children to talk about their family tradition. Age-appropriate activities may be planned to involve the children in preparing for simple celebrations and to help them contribute to family events (e.g., basic cooking, making gifts, and so forth). We limit our school celebrations to very brief spans of time, attempt to maintain our regular school routine, and, as always, are ready to provide extra attention and comfort as needed.

Birthday celebrations for young children can be a special time to share with friends at school and, when possible, for families to join the celebration. **It is our school's policy to not celebrate birthdays with food of any kind. Please do not send any food as gifts for children.** Please contact your child's teacher to find out how birthdays are celebrated in their classroom. If you plan an additional birthday celebration outside of school time, please mail invitations from home unless the entire class is invited.

## **ACCREDITATION**

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has created 10 standards that measure the quality of early childhood programs. The standards were created by a blue-ribbon panel of early childhood experts and are based on the latest early childhood research. We are currently going through the NAEYC accreditation process and continue to reflect on our practice and ensure that we are providing the highest quality of care possible for your children by:

1. Promoting positive **relationships** for all children and adults to encourage each child's sense of individual worth and belonging.
2. Implementing a **curriculum** that fosters all areas of child development: cognitive, emotional, language, physical, and social.

3. Using developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate effective **teaching** approaches.
4. Providing ongoing **assessments** of a child's learning and development to inform teaching practices and communicate the child's progress to the family.
5. Promoting the nutrition and **health** of children, and to protect children and staff from injury and illness.
6. Employing a teaching **staff** that has the educational qualifications, knowledge, and professional commitment necessary to promote children's learning and development, and to support families' diverse needs and interests.
7. Establishing and maintaining collaborative relationships with each child's **family** that are sensitive to culture, language and composition of the family.
8. Establishing relationships with and using the resources of the **community** to support the achievement of program goals.
9. Providing a safe and healthy **physical environment**.
10. Implementing strong personnel, fiscal, and program **management** policies so that all children, families, and staff have high-quality experiences.

In addition, we are licensed by the Arizona Department of Health Services Office of Child Care Licensing. Copies of the AZDHS regulations are available to parents in the VVELC office. The Director collaborates with teaching staff and support staff to guide the documentation procedures and complete the required paperwork for state licensure as well as NAEYC accreditation. We would be happy to discuss any aspect of licensing or the accreditation process with interested families.

## INTERACTION GUIDELINES

Valley View Early Learning Center staff members follow the ethical principles of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. We share the following core values as guides for interactions among staff members, between staff and children, between staff and parents, between staff and district employees, etc.

- We strive to respect each individual and work to create a positive emotional climate for all learners, with sensitivity to differences in age, ability, background, language, culture, religion, and family structure.
- We use direct eye contact, smiles, warm tones of voice, positive touch, social conversations, and joint laughter to support the development of effective working relationships.
- Our partnership in learning is supported by regular, reciprocal communication, affirming recognition of effort and accomplishment, predictable, developmentally appropriate responsiveness to initiative, emotion, and concerns, and proactive conflict resolution.

- We are committed to reaching out to people of different races, genders, ethnicity, and ability, and we strive to create an environment of inclusion that celebrates our differences and highlights our commonalities. Our program accepts children with special needs who live in the Catalina Foothills School District and who qualify for Special Education services.

Because our mission is multifaceted, we aim to build positive relationships with all learning partners by appropriately balancing quality of care for the group with services tailored to individual needs. Our goal is to develop the school’s caring community for learning through broad participation and involvement in program improvement for all of our staff, families, and district partners.

## CURRICULUM

Our curriculum is developed using the Arizona State Early Learning Standards as a guide. Basic skills and concepts are introduced and taught through the use of daily interest areas and table choices based on a developmentally appropriate objective. Skills and instruction are adapted and modified by teachers to meet the needs of each individual child’s developmental level and interest. Interest areas and table choices focus on pre-kindergarten skills and include the areas of: Language/Literacy, Writing, Math, Science/Discovery, Sensory Play, Dramatic Play, Manipulative/Fine Motor Skills, Block Play and Art (emphasis on process). Circle time activities teach and encourage skills that are developmentally appropriate in the areas of language and emergent literacy, math, social skills, and music and movement.

Social Emotional	Language & Literacy	Math	Science
Knowledge of Self *Self-awareness *Recognition and expression of feelings	Oral Language Development *Listening & Understanding *Speaking & Communicating	Number Sense & Operation *Number sense *Numerical operations	Inquiry *Observations, questions & hypotheses *Investigation *Analysis & conclusions *Communication
Social Interactions w/others *Separation & Cooperation	Pre-Reading Process *Print awareness *Book handling skills *Sounds & rhythms of spoken language *Letter knowledge *Vocabulary development *Comprehending stories	Data Analysis *Collection & organization *Data analysis	
Responsibility for Self & Others *Self-control *Respect	Pre-Writing Process *Written expression	Patterns *Creating, copying, extending patterns	
		Geometry & Measurement *Spatial relationships & geometry *Measurement (non-standard/standard units)	
		Structure/Logic *Matching *Sorting *Describing relationships	

Social Studies	Physical Development/Health & Safety	Fine Arts	Approaches to Learning
American History *Research skills *Making connections	Physical & Motor Development *Gross Motor Skills (balancing, control, coordination) *Fine Motor Skills	Visual Art *Creating art *Art in context *Art as inquiry	*Curiosity *Initiative *Persistence *Creativity *Problem-solving *Confidence
World History *Asks questions about similarities/differences in people *Describes characteristics of community	Health *Hygiene *Demonstrates healthy habits (eating, resting, personal health routines)	Music & Creative Movement *Creating music and movement (using instruments, techniques to move) *Music and movement in context/inquiry	
Civics & Government *Rights, responsibilities, roles of citizenship *Demonstrates responsible behavior	Safety *Demonstrates environmental safety practices & routines	Dramatic Play *Creating dramatic play *Dramatic play in context *Dramatic play as inquiry	
Geography *Describes location/direction of places they live within the community *Describes physical features of environment			
Economics *Awareness of goods/services			

Arizona State Early Learning Standards

\*Adapted and modified by certified teachers to implement basic skills

## Outdoor Environment

We believe the outdoor environment is an extension of the classroom. The children have the opportunity to work at outside interest areas in the outdoor environment, which include writing, literacy, dramatic play, sensory, science, and fine/gross motor skills. Children are encouraged to engage in activities that build upon skill levels, which gives them the confidence to attempt higher-level skills. The benefits of physical activity for children include 1.) reduced risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol; 2.) healthy bones and muscles; 3.) improved strength and endurance; 4.) good mental health and cognition; 5.) increased self-esteem; and 6.) healthy weight. Early physical activity and exposure to structured activity and physical skills can lay the groundwork for an active lifestyle as an adult.

In accordance with Arizona’s Empower Program and current health recommendations, children enrolled in our full day program are offered at least 120 minutes of active playtime each day, including both structured (teacher-led) and unstructured (child directed, free play). Our teachers lead children in activities promoting gross motor skill development throughout the day, accumulating the recommended 60 minutes of teacher-led activity by the end of the day. Active time or outdoor play is not withheld from children for misbehavior.

## **VVELC uses Emergent Curriculum instead of a written curriculum**

Emergent curriculum describes the kind of curriculum that develops when exploring what is socially and culturally relevant, intellectually engaging, and personally meaningful to children. The basic idea is that organic, whole learning evolves from the interaction of the classroom participants, both children and adults. "As caring adults, we make choices for children that reflect our values; at the same time, we need to keep our plans open-ended and responsive to children" (Jones and Nimmo, 1994, p3). In emergent curriculum, both adults and children have initiative and make decisions. This power to impact curriculum decisions and directions means that sometimes curriculum is also negotiated between what interests children and what adults know is necessary for children's education and development. Ideas for curriculum emerge from responding to the interests, questions, and concerns generated within a particular environment, by a particular group of people, at a particular time (Cassady, 1993). Emergent curriculum is never built on children's interests alone; teachers and parents also have interests worth bringing into the curriculum. The values, beliefs and experiences of all the adults involved help the classroom culture evolve. The curriculum is called emergent because it evolves, diverging along new paths as choices and connections are made, and it is always open to new possibilities that were not thought of during the initial planning process (Jones and Reynolds, 1992).

Emergent curriculum arises naturally from adult-child interactions and situations that allow for "teachable moments". It connects learning with experience and prior learning. It includes all interests of children and responds to their interests rather than focusing on a narrow, individual, or calendar driven topic. It is process rather than product driven. The curriculum is typically implemented after an idea or interest area emerges.

In traditional classrooms the teacher initiates the curriculum. Each unit has a theme and activities are planned and prepared in advance. An emergent curriculum is one that builds upon the interests, experiences, cultures and languages of the children in a particular group. It is often spontaneous and responsive to the immediate interests of a group of children. Topics are driven by the ideas, excitement, information and questions from the children themselves.

Ideas can be supported and extended by providing equipment, books, craft supplies, and experiences through which the children can learn more about their natural interests and curiosities. The teacher is not the "expert" who knows all and teaches the children but rather s/he co-explores alongside the children and observes and encourages their discoveries.

The initial topic may sprout off in many directions combining several seemingly unrelated topics. Each topic may last a day, a week, a month or more – as long as the children are interested in pursuing the ideas. The teacher can develop a plan by observing and listening to the children at play or by asking the children open-ended questions.

## Key Principles of Emergent Curriculum

Our understanding of children guides our decision-making. We view children as competent, full of wonder, willing to investigate, critique, reflect, and collaborate. This understanding shapes our decisions about how to arrange our classroom environment, schedule our days, and plan our curriculum.

Teachers pay careful attention to the use of space and time. The classroom environment sets the tone, inviting children to explore, collaborate, reflect, and communicate using a range of media. The schedule each day allows for long stretches of open-ended time during which children can pursue their questions, passions, and developmental themes.

Curriculum planning is based on observation. Teachers observe children as they play, paying close attention to recurring themes, developmental issues, and underlying questions. Observations guide curriculum planning, as we create opportunities for children to deepen their thinking, represent their understandings, and encounter new perspectives.

Teachers consider relationships to be central. Teachers emphasize relationship building and cooperation among children, and between teachers and children. Teachers actively seek out collaboration with other teachers and with families, asking and encouraging questions about children's play, and sharing their observations. When we ask families to share their perspectives and invite them to help us make decisions about classroom life and curriculum, we enrich our understanding and include families in the life children live at school.

## FIELD TRIPS

At VVELC, we do not take our children on field trips away from the school premises. We choose to bring learning opportunities to the children so that they are kept safe and feel comfortable with their surroundings. Children are always supervised by teaching staff when visitors come to the school.

## DEVELOPMENTAL OBJECTIVES

Since 1988, the highly skilled Early Childhood Educators at VVELC have nurtured young children's social, cognitive, emotional and physical development. We have specified learning goals for 3-, 4-, and 5-year olds based on the Arizona Early Learning Standards in each of the following nine (9) developmental areas that are assessed with the Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment:

- 1) **Social-Emotional**- regulating emotions and behavior, establishing and sustaining positive relationships, participating cooperatively and constructively
- 2) **Physical** - demonstrating traveling, balancing, gross motor manipulative and fine motor strength and coordination.

- 3) **Language** – listening and understanding increasingly complex language, using language to express thoughts and needs, using appropriate conversational and communication skills.
- 4) **Cognitive** – demonstrating positive approaches to learning, remembering and connecting experiences, using classification skills, using symbols and images to represent something not present.
- 5) **Literacy** – demonstrating phonological awareness, knowledge of the alphabet, print and its uses, comprehending and responding to books and other texts, demonstrating emergent writing skills.
- 6) **Mathematics** – using number concepts and operations, exploring and describing spatial relationships and shapes, comparing and measuring, demonstrating knowledge of patterns.
- 7) **Science and Technology** – Using scientific inquiry skills and tools and other technology to perform tasks, demonstrating knowledge of characteristics of living things, of physical properties of objects and materials, and of the Earth’s environment.
- 8) **Social Studies** – demonstrating knowledge of self, showing basic understanding of people and how they live, exploring change related to familiar people or places, and demonstrating simple geographic knowledge.
- 9) **Fine Arts** – exploring visual arts, musical concepts and expression, dance, drama and movement through actions and language.

## ASSESSMENT

Teaching teams use the nine (9) areas and 36 objectives in the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment program as a flexible framework for planning learning experiences to promote the growth and development of each individual child. We support children in doing as much for themselves as possible. We strive to support a variety of social experiences by organizing our time and space to balance individual, pair, small group, and large group activities. Staff members serve as coaches as children practice social skills involved in peer interactions, friendship formation, and conflict resolution. Throughout the day, we engage children in conversation, with extra support for peer conversation at snack and lunchtime.

Assessment is naturally integrated into the course of every day as ongoing teacher observation of group patterns and individual development is used to adjust the program to better support group and individual progress. Teaching teams meet weekly to identify the group’s current interests and needs and then plan accordingly for the next week’s explorations. At times, these reflections indicate the need for altering the classroom environment, shifting the project focus, trying new teaching strategies, etc. If concerns about individual children’s development arise and are not readily remedied via classroom adaptations, teachers initiate a dialogue with colleagues and parents to plan approaches to try at both home and school.

Twice per year, the teachers combine these informal assessment techniques with more systematic assessment of each child relative to the school's developmental objectives for the purpose of describing each child's developmental progress. Teaching teams work together to conduct these systematic assessments, though the child's primary teacher takes the lead in summarizing the findings. The process is typically collaborative, with the primary teacher drafting the report and then getting input from the teaching team, and other teaching staff as appropriate. These descriptions are shared with parents, both in writing and via personal conferences. Fall and Spring conference reports include narrative descriptions of children's progress in the nine developmental areas. Staff – parent dialogue during conferences and throughout the school year strengthens our understanding of each child's developmental profile and often leads to ideas for individualizing both staff and parent support of children's learning, as well as plans for smooth transitions to elementary school.

Because of the detailed discussion of children's progress, conferences typically last approximately 30 minutes and are not appropriate for children other than nursing infants to attend.

### **Assessment Procedures**

Teachers attend formal training through the Arizona Department of Education in using the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment tool. Most VVELC assessment is informal, with direct observation by familiar staff members as the primary method. Teachers document observations in their own unique ways, though most record anecdotal notes, take photographs of constructions and interactions, and collect samples of the children's artwork, journal entries, and other projects.

Because even young children are savvy enough, however, to avoid tasks in areas that are difficult for them and to rely on peers to support their performance when avoidance is not possible, our staff occasionally conduct more formal, individual assessments focused on precisely determining what a child knows or can do. Whenever possible, these assessments are designed as typical classroom activities and are widely distributed in time. For example, a teacher might assess knowledge of letters and numerals by having the child be the caller in a bingo game played with peers. Gross motor skills may be assessed by having children practice an obstacle course that is set up in the motor room or outside. With individuals and in small group settings, teachers often use puzzles or other manipulatives, to check a child's knowledge of shapes, counting ability, etc. All of these assessments are conducted within the regular program space and during the typical program hours. In cases where a child's performance on these more formal assessments is not consistent with more informal observations, the assessment will be repeated, conducted by another staff member, so that the results can be verified.

Data from both informal and formal assessments are incorporated into the conference reports written by the child's primary teacher in October and April for each child. VVELC assessments and conference forms are sensitive to diversity in the following ways. Assessments involve only activities that are familiar to the children, and every effort is made to eliminate verbal directions that might not be understood by a child with a language disability or limited English proficiency. Teachers may eliminate from the conference report any items that cannot be fairly assessed because of the child's language abilities. Conference forms are routinely adapted for children with special needs at the level that qualifies them for the support of itinerant therapists or full-time special education support staff.

Occasionally, staff and/or parents identify the need for additional screening and referral for professional diagnostic assessment. In those cases, staff and parents typically include the Director/Principal and Special Education staff in determining how to move forward in the best interest of the child.

VVELC does not conduct any norm-referenced or standardized assessments of preschool children for comparison purposes. At present, we are using the assessments described above, together with our professional judgment, rather than a standardized screening to determine whether to recommend that further professional screening should be initiated. Eligibility for special services is determined by diagnostic assessments conducted by professionals. If you would like more specific information regarding our screening and assessment methods, choice, use, scoring and/or interpretation, we would be happy to provide it to you upon request.

### **Uses of Assessment Results**

Results of VVELC assessments are primarily used to shape the current year's program planning and to discuss individual children's developmental progress with parents so that we can work together to best support each child's growth.

In addition, the group results impact the school's quality improvement process via each teaching staff's annual evaluation and the whole school annual evaluation, both of which are conducted in May in preparation for enhancements implemented for the next school year.

### **Children Have Special Needs**

Classes composed of children with diverse abilities provide enrichment for everyone through learning about each other's similarities and differences. In keeping with the spirit of the goals of Valley View ELC, we will provide for children with special needs in our classes. Three- to five-year old children with vision, hearing, speech, language or learning differences receive appropriate special services to enable them to maximize their preschool experience. Rather than being singled out, these children's needs are

met, to the maximum extent possible, within their peer groups. This is achieved through a team approach that includes preschool teachers, special education teachers, educational assistants, a speech and language specialist, and other specialists and therapists. Our goal is to provide early interventions that may reduce or eliminate the need for special education services in elementary school.

**Parents of children in Special Education must call the school office on or before the day that their child will be late or absent.** Attendance is recorded daily and by calling the school, we are able to record your child's absence as excused. This is especially important as state funding for special education students is directly related to their attendance.

Should families need information about other resources in the community, including health, mental health, assessment, educational services, etc., our program staff would be happy to provide some local options in the community. We maintain a current list of services available in the community at the reception area and it is available upon request.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Because the staff at VVELC works as a team, each adult knows and interacts at times with every child. Therefore, all observations and other assessment data may be shared with all staff members. Information about family situations, special needs, and other sensitive issues is shared on an as needed basis. Student workers, volunteers, and other adults working within the school are only informed of such sensitive issues when they are a part of keeping the child safe, or when supporting the child's inclusion. All adults working in VVELC sign the following confidentiality agreement.

"As an adult working, observing, and/or regularly volunteering at Valley View Early Learning Center, I may become privy to confidential information regarding children and families. It is of the utmost importance that I realize that all such information is strictly personal and confidential and can only be shared within the confines of Valley View Early Learning Center. I will discuss children's behavior out of the hearing distance of the children, and I will discuss with families, children, and staff for professional purposes only. When I encounter families, children or staff outside the school, I will be courteous but use discretion. I understand that written authorization is required before disclosing any information regarding a child to an outside agency or individual. I know that confidentiality is an ethical obligation and that it is a requirement for my continued involvement at Valley View Early Learning Center. By signing this statement, I agree to understand and practice Valley View Early Learning Center's confidentiality policy at all times."

Official written records for each child are kept in files in a locked cabinet in the VVELC office and released only to the individuals working with a child, as described above, or

those for whom parents sign a written release. These files include enrollment forms, final conference reports, health assessments provided by physicians, reports of diagnostic assessments released to the school by parents, individual education plans, etc. Staff documentation of children's behavior and development, including specialized records for children whose special circumstances require extra classroom documentation are kept in classroom locations accessible to teachers but out of the reach of children and out of sight of classroom visitors.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES**

At all times, health and safety are top priorities at VVELC. Each individual's vigilance regarding health and safety issues contributes significantly to our effectiveness. Always assume that you are the only one who notices a problem or potential problem and bring it to the attention of a staff person.

### **Staff Responsibility**

Staff members are responsible for maintaining a healthy, safe environment. We begin with our own health by submitting annual health appraisals and following even more strict illness exclusions than those required for children. All staff members submit criminal record and child abuse clearances as part of the employment process. We participate in an annual pediatric first aid / CPR class, fire safety class, and review of our emergency procedures. Each classroom has a well-equipped first aid kit, as do bathrooms outside. We practice evacuation drills specified in our Emergency Action Plan in a serious but non-dramatic fashion with the children at a rate of one per month. Staff members are responsible for daily checks of their classrooms and shared spaces for hazards such as missing safety covers on outlets, elevated water temperature in the bathrooms, trash or food in the outdoor classroom, etc.

VVELC is a smoke-free environment with a safe water supply from the City of Tucson Water and heating, ventilation, and cooling systems maintained in accordance with national standards. VVELC was built in 2008 and expanded in 2016 and is free of asbestos and lead. Catalina Foothills School District Facilities Department does periodic checks for other environmental hazards, as well as diligently monitors the status of our safety equipment and uses an integrated pest management program.

With the help of our custodial staff, we follow NAEYC's frequency table for cleaning and sanitation throughout the school, including toys and water play areas. All staff members follow standard precautions to minimize spread of infectious disease and store hazardous materials in locked cabinets. We follow parent and/or health professional recommendations regarding children who have allergies, and we limit classroom pets to fish, amphibians, worms, and insects. Our outdoor classroom has many shaded areas. During summer months, when children are outside for a longer

time and wearing bathing suits, we will apply sunblock provided by the parents with a minimum UVB and UVA protection of SPF 30 if a sunscreen consent form is on file.

## **Hand Washing**

Because hand washing is the #1 preventive measure to avoid the spread of disease, we explicitly teach, scaffold, and monitor hand-washing procedures that involve the use of liquid soap and running water, with vigorous and thorough rubbing for at least 20 seconds (the length of a children's song), followed by paper towel drying and faucet contact. We, and the children, wash our hands upon entry. Parents are expected to assist in the initial hand washing upon arrival as part of the regular routine. We also wash hands before and after snacks and meals, before and after food preparation, after toileting, after contact with bodily fluids, after play in the water table and after re-entry from the outdoor classroom, as well as after any messy activities. Adults will assist children that are not yet ready to complete all the steps independently. Adults also wash their hands after assisting with toileting, handling garbage or cleaning, and before and after feeding a child or administering medication.

### **Hand Washing Steps**

1. Wet the hands with warm, running water.
2. Apply liquid soap in a very small amount.
3. Wash the fronts, backs, in between fingers and palms using gentle pressure while rubbing the hands together.
4. Rinse all the soap and soil from the hands with running water, allowing the used water to go down the drain. Leave the water running.
5. Dry the hands completely with a disposable paper towel.
6. Turn off the water with the used towel to prevent re-contaminating the clean hands with germs and soil from the faucet handles.
7. Discard paper towels immediately into trash container.

## **Illness and Injury**

Staff members greet children at the beginning of the day, being watchful of their appearance as they enter and throughout the day. Children who become sick at school are removed from the group and cared for until parents can be contacted to come for the child.

Young children often experience falls or bumps during the course of a day, especially in the outdoor classroom. Usually, they do not result in injury and are handled with simple comfort, a drink of water, or a sympathetic band aid or ice pack (may not be necessary but comforting). When children sustain a cut, bruise, or other injury, staff members will provide treatment according to procedures specified in our pediatric first aid training. They will verbally report the injury to parents, guardians or caregivers, recommend treatment by a medical professional if appropriate, and complete an injury report within one day. Copies are kept in the accident/injury logbook and given to the family.

Parents or guardians will be notified immediately in case of a more serious accident and prompt action will be taken including contacting EMS personnel if the situation warrants. If necessary, we will accompany the child to the hospital preferred by the family in the ambulance. In these cases, injury reports are supplemented by the EMS reports.

### Sick Children

The VVELC community relies on the adult family members' thoughtful assessment of each child's health before sending him or her to school. Even if your child begs to come to school, please keep him or her at home if any of the following symptoms are evident. Any of these may indicate the beginning of an illness, which might be easily communicated to other children.

- Oral temperature above 100 degrees within the past 24 hours
- Diarrhea
- Rash, bump or other out-of-the-ordinary skin conditions
- Flushed face, "watery" or "glossy" eyes
- Excessive running nose
- Deep or dry cough
- Continuous sneezing
- Sore throat
- Vomiting within the past 24 hours
- Unusual irritability, listlessness, fatigue

When your child will not be in school, please call the school at (520) 209-7650 between 7:30 and 9:30am. Please let the main office know if your child has contracted a contagious condition or disease so that we can notify other families and staff members who might be affected.

In most cases in which medication is required, physicians recommend that the child be on medication for a full 24 hours (ex. Antibiotic) or be fever free without the use of medicine for 24 hours before returning to school. In addition, please keep your child home until the child is well enough to participate fully in both indoor and outdoor activities, because we do not have staff members available to supervise children indoors while the rest of the class is outdoors. **If medication needs to be given while the child is at school, please bring the medication in its original labeled container with written directions from the doctor to the office and complete a medication consent form. Medication will be stored in the front office and administered by the Health Assistant according to written directions. Do not send medication in the child's lunchbox or backpack.**

## **Family Responsibility**

As part of the enrollment process, parents must complete an emergency information form (blue card) and give permission for staff members to administer basic first aid to their child. Review of this emergency information is required every semester, so we typically conduct a review when parents are at school for their conferences. In addition, parents or guardians should contact the school any time there is a change in the emergency contact information. Additional consent forms for multimedia recording, release of information and sunscreen application are also required.

Prior to the child's first day of school, parents are required to submit a current health assessment of the child, including either proof of the recommended immunizations or a signed statement indicating that the family has objections to immunization. Thereafter, parents must submit an updated form after the yearly well-child checkup. Parents of children speaking English as a second language are asked to complete a form detailing the children's level of proficiency and then invited to dialogue with teachers regarding strategies to assist the child's transition as necessary. Parents of children with allergies must provide us with information regarding necessary adaptations of activities or environment, responses staff should take in the event of an allergic reaction, and any necessary staff training. Parents of children with other special needs should contact an administrator for guidance regarding necessary documentation and advance planning with the staff. This information is confidential but must be available to administrators, teaching staff, and regulatory authorities upon request.

## **SCREENING**

Our program completes screenings within 45 days of enrollment. Hearing and vision screenings will be scheduled during the school hours. The screenings are conducted by CFSD RN, on-site health assistant and on-site speech pathologist. Teachers will complete a 45-day developmental screening as well. Teachers observe each child in their class within 45 days of enrollment in the program. A completed screening tool indicating developmental observations/concerns is shared with the Director/Principal for review. Parents will be notified of screening results within 10 days of the administrative review if concerns are noted. A free dental screening is also provided through First Smiles Matter upon parent consent.

## **STAFFING AND SUPERVISION**

The AZDHS Office of Childcare Licensing allows a 1:15 ratio for preschool age children. However, we maintain better staff to child ratios at all times. These ratios are applicable both indoors and outdoors.

Minimum of 1:8 for Young 3's  
Minimum of 1:9 for Mixed Age

At any time when children are present in the school, there are at least two adults present, at least one of which is a teaching staff member. Staff members, as a group, supervise **preschool children** primarily by sight. Classroom space is designed so that there are no areas of the room where children can hide. Supervision by sound is permissible for short intervals, such as when children go to the bathroom from the classroom or outdoors.

## **STAFF TEAMS**

Valley View Early Learning Center is staffed by teams of educators. The administrative team includes a Principal, Jennifer Dooley, School Secretary, Margie Brown, Office Clerk/Health Assistant, Amy Bock, and the Director of Community Schools, Travis Kolter. Each classroom includes one certified teacher and one educational assistant teacher in addition to Special Education staff when special needs children are present. The Special Education team includes two special education teachers and two educational assistants, a speech/language pathologist, a physical therapist, an occupational therapist, and a psychologist. All teachers and administrators have many years of experience in education, as well as a bachelor's degree and often an advanced degree in early childhood education, psychology, or a related field. Educational Assistants complement each team, and pre-service teachers from local colleges often do field placements or student teaching at our school.

All Valley View Early Learning Center (VVELC) employees are hired and managed according to the Human Resources policies of Catalina Foothills School District. They are thoroughly oriented, earn a competitive salary, have paid planning time, and receive full benefits. VVELC provides a professional development program that includes a minimum of 18 hours per year, as well as supports each individual's goals for growth via additional seminars, college coursework, publications, and professional experiences.

Our experienced educators participate actively in the local and national early childhood communities by serving in leadership capacities, giving regular presentations and partnering with high quality programs to develop new avenues for early childhood professional development.

We make every effort for all children to know and be known by all adults in our open school environment so that they are comfortable interacting with and seeking assistance from any adult. Each child is assigned to a **primary teacher**, and each assistant teacher works with all children in a particular group so that he or she is familiar with the children and routines for each group and can effectively substitute when a teacher is absent. When absences are planned in advance, we recruit substitutes who have long-term familiarity with our program, often former teachers or others who have trained at VVELC.

Because our program runs on an academic calendar, children typically stay in the same class with the same staff from September through May. If they participate in the optional Community Schools summer camp program, the children may transition to a different group. Children will only transition to a new teaching staff if the family and principal deem it necessary and a move is dependent on program availability.

### **Babysitting**

VVELC Staff are not permitted to provide childcare for families whose child(ren) is enrolled in VVELC. The rationale for this policy involves important professional issues. Briefly, working for a family outside of school places the staff member in a position with the real potential of conflicting roles. This can occur both with regard to their relationship with the child and/or the parents. Please remember this policy and do not ask our staff to babysit for your children.

### **PARENTS AS PARTNERS**

Valley View Early Learning Center offers adult family members and other caregivers a variety of ways to become involved in the child's school community, to participate in family activities, and to confer with the staff to build a strong bond between home and school. During the year, each teacher meets with parents to share information about the child's school and home life. Regular communication is encouraged among families, caregivers, and the school staff so that multiple perspectives on the child's development and interests can be used to enhance the child's school experience. In addition to the detailed family handbook, we have scheduled parent meetings and conferences, frequent spontaneous interaction and share other information with families via Bloomz or email.

If any parents would benefit from translation services at conferences or for key documents, we can and will provide assistance in finding a translator who is fluent in the relevant language. We can also guide families to culturally and linguistically appropriate services, if needed.

Parents or guardians can visit the center at any time or schedule classroom visits to observe their child in the program. If you want to talk with a teacher, please schedule a time either before or after school (8:00 to 9:00am, 11:30-12:30pm or 2:30 - 3:30pm). All parents can observe their children in the outdoor classroom from inside the building at any time.

The popular family events, including Open House, Trunk or Treat, and Pajama Night, offer the whole family a chance to participate in the child's school. In addition, many parents or guardians extend their involvement by volunteering in school wide and/or classroom activities. We ask that you complete the parent involvement form so that we can use this information to arrange meetings, compose committees, and schedule

activities according to parent preferences as much as possible. Committees support the school by managing our library of children's books, coordinating the Family Faculty Organization events, repairing broken toys and equipment, organizing family services such as school pictures and scholastic book sales, planning all fundraising events, and advising our program of family and community needs. Parent or guardians who are willing to volunteer in the classroom after the children have adjusted to the new routine can make arrangements with their child's teacher.

If you have questions or have experienced a problem at home or school, please approach the child's primary teacher or the administrator directly. Changes in care-giving arrangements, the death of a pet, an extended absence of a parent, etc. can all cause changes in a child's demeanor and behavior at school; therefore, timely communication helps the staff respond most effectively to the child. We make every effort to dialogue with children and families in a positive manner to plan strategies, resolve issues, and provide assistance in a timely and effective manner. Please also feel free to suggest ways that we can strengthen our partnership with you as together we seek to provide a high-quality learning environment for everyone in our school community.

All parents or guardians are invited to participate in Fall and Spring Conference Surveys, Special Event Surveys and VVELC's annual program evaluation via a survey conducted in the spring. Feedback from these surveys contributes to our continuous quality improvement. Evaluation results, plans, and opportunities are highlighted in the first FFO meeting held during the school year and updated as necessary via email or Bloomz posts.

### **Cell Phone Usage**

Valley View Early Learning Center is a cell-phone free zone. We ask that you refrain from using your cell phone in our building so that you can share special time with your child during drop off and pick up.

### **Parking**

Please use the Sunrise Drive south entrance and the Skyline Drive north entrance/exit to access our school parking lot. There is also an entry/exit using Campo Abierto. Please exercise caution when using this street as it is also used by neighboring businesses and residents. Please do not use cell phones in our parking lots for the safety of all children and their families. Drive slowly and be vigilant upon entering the parking lot. After dropping your child off, please be respectful of other families trying to find parking space. Idling vehicles in our parking lot are discouraged.

## **VOLUNTEERS/VISITORS**

Parents or guardians are welcome to volunteer in their child's classroom. Arrangements can be made with the classroom teacher. Any person who is not a parent wanting to volunteer in a classroom must complete a volunteer application through the district Human Resources office and must obtain a fingerprint clearance card.

Any irregular guest or classroom visitors must secure a visitor's badge at the front desk. This serves as a sign to staff that this person has checked in at the front office and is allowed on campus.

## **BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES**

At VVELC, our rules and expectations are designed to help children learn to manage their behavior for effective **interaction and cooperation**. All staff members guide and support children by clearly communicating in a positive manner and tone. For example, "Let's keep the sand in the sand table so that we have a lot to pour." Typically, the children are eager to act appropriately and are recognized for doing so. We design activities that are age appropriate in both task and duration to maximize positive interactions. Our teachers also carefully monitor the children's activities to anticipate and diffuse problems before they begin. A child who is losing interest in one activity or getting too loud may be redirected to another area that can spark renewed engagement and positive behavior.

### **Basic Behavior Expectations at Valley View ELC**

Knowing and meeting expectations encourages **independent** action and fosters **self-esteem**.

#### School Rules:

- **Be a kind friend.**
- **Follow the routine.**
- **Use a safe body and safe hands.**
- **Stay in your own space.**
- **Use your words.**
- **Use inside voices.**
- **Use walking feet.**
- **Use materials appropriately.**
- **Help put everything back in its place.**

The students in each class will discuss behavior expectations throughout the year. As appropriate, **each class will add specific examples** relating to each of the items listed above.

All VVELC staff will:

- Provide limits in a calm, consistent, and respectful manner, which allows the child to grow in self-control and self-esteem.
- Respond to a child's challenging behavior, including physical aggression, in a manner that provides for the safety of the child and the others in the classroom.
- Help children learn to identify both positive and negative emotions, as well as to respond to them appropriately.
- Work with children to develop conflict resolution skills necessary to solve their disagreements in an appropriate manner.
- Help children express and acknowledge their choices.
- Help children describe problems, evaluate their actions, verbalize alternatives, and consider the perspective of others. Children are guided and supported as they learn to accept the natural consequences of their actions.

This approach includes positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior, redirection, reminders of classroom rules, modifying the classroom environment and/or daily schedule, and if necessary providing a supervised quiet time for the child to gain control. After a quiet time, the teacher invites the child to rejoin the group and reminds the child of the relevant expectations for the activity in progress.

Staff shall observe all children and document any problem behavior to help ascertain any patterns re: events, activities, and interactions, as well as any precipitating contextual factors. If a child's behavior problem persists or becomes dangerous to the other children in the class (e.g., punching, kicking, temper tantrums), the teacher will bring the child to the school office to regain composure and talk with the Principal. Such situations are rare at VVELC and are discussed thoroughly with the child, the teacher, and the parent to determine positive steps toward solution.

Families are referred to specialists for help with persistent problems that may be linked to developmental issues, with the goal being to support the child's successful inclusion in the classroom.

## **STEPS FOR ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS**

1. The behaviors of children shall be addressed by classroom staff as outlined by the Behavior Guidelines. This approach includes positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior, redirection, reminders of classroom rules, modifying the classroom environment and/or daily schedule, and providing a supervised quiet time for the child to gain control. Staff shall observe all children and use appropriate forms for documenting any atypical behavior to help ascertain any patterns re: events, activities, and interactions, as well as precipitating contextual factors.

2. When a child exhibits a challenging behavior on a continual basis that is not resolved through appropriate behavior management strategies, the teachers will plan a meeting with the Principal to discuss the challenging behavior and ask for further guidance. If relevant, Special Education staff will participate.
3. If the challenging behavior is still not resolved, the staff shall request a meeting with the child's parent(s). At the meeting, staff and parent(s) will collaboratively develop individualized strategies including a Behavior Plan to resolve the challenging behavior. During this process, teachers will keep the Principal and parents informed of progress in resolving the challenging behavior. Teachers will provide information to the parent(s) in written form with copies kept in the child's file. If a child's behavior results in an injury to another child or staff member, the child's parents will be notified as soon as possible and written documentation of the incident will be provided to the parents and placed in the child's file.
4. If the teachers feel that they need further assistance in resolving the challenging behavior, the Principal may request that the parents seek the assistance of an outside party. If the problem may be the result of a special need, a request by the parents to arrange for an evaluation of the child may occur. The goal of this behavior management process is to support the child's inclusion and success. If the parents refuse to pursue evaluation and the challenging behavior continues, the continued enrollment of the child will be reconsidered in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 6 below.
5. If the results of an outside evaluation suggest the need for accommodations for special needs, VVELC will provide these to district residents, or other appropriate, accommodations as long as they are not an undue hardship on VVELC as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Children outside of our district boundaries requiring evaluation will be referred to their home district.
6. If all the above steps fail to resolve the challenging behavior, VVELC may ask the parents to find an alternative educational placement for their child. VVELC will provide the parents with 4-weeks' notice when possible except where such notice is not reasonable because of safety concerns, and will try to assist the parents with alternative placement.
7. Written documentation of all the above steps will be provided to the parents and placed in the child's file.

## **PROHIBITED PRACTICES & REPORTING CHILD ABUSE**

If any staff member or person from the child's family, while in the vicinity of VVELC, engages in a practice prohibited by the program, the Director/Principal will take necessary steps to assure that there is no reoccurrence of the practice.

- Corporal or any type of physical punishment, including hitting, spanking, slapping, shaking, pinching, pulling limbs or other measures that produce physical pain, is not permitted.

- Withdrawal or the threat of withdrawal of food, rest, or bathroom opportunities is not permitted.
- Abusive, profane or derogatory language, including yelling and belittling, is not permitted.
- Any form of psychological abuse, including public or private humiliation, threats of physical punishment, rejecting, terrorizing, isolating, or corrupting a child, is not permitted.
- Any form of coercive tactics, including forcing a child to perform an action, rough handling, forcing a child to sit or be inactive, is not permitted.

All observations or other suspicions of child abuse or neglect will be immediately reported to the appropriate authorities no matter where the abuse might have occurred. If the parent or legal guardian of the child is suspected of abuse, the Director/Principal will follow the guidance of the Department of Child Safety or the police department regarding notification of the parent or legal guardian. We are required by law to report within 24 hours of observing the child or hearing from the child.

A staff member who is accused of child abuse may be suspended or given leave without pay pending investigation of the accusation. Such caregivers may also be removed from the classroom and given a job that does not require interaction with children. Parents or legal guardians of suspected abused children will be notified. Parents or legal guardians of other children in the program will be contacted by the Principal if a caregiver is suspected of abuse so that they may share any concerns they have had. However, no accusation or affirmation of guilt will be made until the investigation is complete. Caregivers found guilty of child abuse will be summarily dismissed or relieved of their duties.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

The program staff encourages families to raise concerns and work collaboratively to find mutually satisfying solutions that staff incorporate into classroom practice. Any parent may follow the following procedure to resolve a school related problem:

1. Problem initially handled among the parties directly involved. Teaching staff will be available to families via emails, notes, phone, or in person communications.
2. If Step 1 does not solve the problem or if the parent is not comfortable speaking to the parties involved, the parent should speak to the Principal, who will attempt to resolve the problem. If the problem is not resolved, go to Step 3.
3. Address the problem, in writing, to the Director of Community Schools. If this does not result in satisfaction, go to Step 4.
4. Write a formal grievance to the Superintendent of Catalina Foothills School District.

## **BUILDING SECURITY**

Our front office always has a staff member at the front desk to greet and check-in visitors. All visitors are required to sign-in and wear a visitor's badge. Our other five (5) emergency exits remain locked at all times. The emergency exits have illuminated exit signs and have video surveillance that can be seen from our front desk. Our exit doors are also alarmed with sound whenever they are opened.

## **EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN**

Valley View Early Learning Center has an Emergency Action Plan in place that includes evacuation of the building. Our first evacuation sites are the outdoor classroom or the parking lot. In the event of a long-term evacuation, we contact families as quickly as possible via phone and bulk email to notify them of the plan for reuniting them with their children. We have monthly evacuation drills so the children and staff are familiar with the procedures. An outline of the Emergency Action Plan can be viewed upon request at the front office.

In an emergency or time-critical situation when the Director/Principal is not present or reachable by phone, the School Secretary, Office Clerk and the most senior teacher present decide collaboratively on a course of action.

## **INSURANCE**

Valley View Early Learning Center carries liability and accident insurance.

## **LICENSING**

WVLC is licensed and regulated by ADHS (Arizona Department of Health Services), Office of Child Care Licensure, 400 W. Congress, Suite 100, Tucson, AZ 85701, phone 520-628-6540. Inspection reports are available upon request from the Director/Principal.

WVLC operates a kitchen for food service licensed by the Pima County Health Department, 3950 S. Country Club Rd. Ste. 100. Inspection reports are posted in the kitchen and are available upon request from the Director/Principal.

## **PESTICIDE APPLICATION**

In accordance with EBAA-R all pesticide application information is available to parents upon request. A 48-hour advance notification of pesticide application will be posted on the front window.

## **WELLNESS POLICY**

Catalina Foothills School District Governing Board has adopted Policy JL and Regulation JL-R, Student Wellness, in accordance with 42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq. (National School Lunch Act), 42 U.S.C. 1771 et seq. (Child Nutrition Act), ARS 15-242, and as recommended by the District Wellness Committee. A copy of this policy can be viewed at the VVELC reception desk. We can also provide you with a copy if you prefer.