



NMSU School for
Young Children

Family Handbook

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Dear Families,

Welcome to the NMSU School for Young Children! Attached is the Family Handbook, which explains our philosophies and practices. **Please read the handbook in its entirety and return the last page by the first day of the program.** We suggest that you put this handbook in a place where it will be easily available for future reference. If you have any questions or concerns regarding any aspect of the program, please feel free to discuss them with us.

We look forward to getting to know you and your child.

Sincerely,

The NMSU School for Young Children Staff

Center Contact Information

New Mexico State University School for Young Children
Located in Myrna's Children's Village
4101 Sam Steele Las Cruces, NM 88003
Buildings 300, 600 & 700

Room/Person	Building #	Phone #
SFYC Director	306C	646-7933
Turtles (Toddlers)	700A	646-3206
Bobcats (Preschoolers)	600A	646-4183
Roadrunners (Pre-K)	300A	646-7300

Roadrunner

Hours of Operation: 8:15-11:45 & 12:45-4:15 Monday through Thursday

Turtles and Bobcats

Hours of Operation: 7:30am – 5:30pm Monday through Friday

See SFYC calendar for additional information regarding days of operation.

"Children construct their own intelligence. The adult must provide activities and context, but most of all must be able to listen. Children need proof that adults believe in them. Their three great desires are to be listened to, to understand, and to demonstrate that they are exactly what we expect."

Loris Malaguzzi

Program Information

Laboratory School Description

The NMSU SFYC serves as educational training and research laboratory for New Mexico State University in several different ways. This is a site for field experience courses for College of Education and individuals from other disciplines and colleges and for student teacher candidates. Families, students and faculty may observe the classroom environments. Students may enter the classroom to observe, conduct appropriate activities with groups of children, or to serve as teacher's aides. Students and faculty may conduct research by observing or video or audio taping the experiences of the children. In all cases laboratory procedures have been established for the safety of the children. All data collected is kept **confidential** and will be used for educational purposes only. Staff and volunteers must understand and sign a confidentiality statement. Families will always be notified in writing of any research projects to be conducted in the classroom. The privacy and confidentiality of the children and their families is of primary concern. Families must understand and accept the tenets of a laboratory school to enroll their children in the NMSU SFYC.

Mission Statement

It is the mission of the NMSU SFYC to provide a supportive and stimulating environment for children two years of age through five years of age.

Goals

The goals of the NMSU SFYC are to provide a quality early childhood program in order to:

- Meet the developmental needs of young children and their families.
- Form stable, nurturing relationships with all children and families in the program.
- Support families in their role as their child's first teacher.
- Provide an educational training and research laboratory for University students and faculty.
- Serve as a model program for the community.

Program Philosophy

The NMSU SFYC is based on a philosophy of **child-centered learning**, inspired by the practices of the municipal infant/toddler centers of Reggio Emilia, Italy. In particular, the Reggio approach has inspired us to view each child, family and teacher as strong and ready to learn. Our practice is rooted in the belief that an effective program is possible only through partnership and collaboration between teachers, families and children. We strive to create a beautiful and comfortable environment where children, teachers and families are given the guidance and freedom to fulfill their potential.

The program is **developmental** in its approach because we respect and support the natural stages of the child's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. The program addresses the needs and rights of the whole child, as opposed to specific isolated areas of development. Children develop concepts about themselves, others and the world by interacting through play and participating in short and long term projects. The teachers are learning facilitators, rather than activity directors. They create environments that expose children to many learning possibilities in the course of their play. The children's interests serve as the foundation for learning.

The population served by the NMSU School for Young Children is culturally and linguistically diverse. Our staff is committed to maintaining a classroom environment that honors and respects this diversity. We select materials that represent a variety of linguistic, gender and cultural possibilities in order to establish an **anti-bias**

curriculum. We seek resources from students, families and the community to include in the curriculum. Finally, because we are University affiliated and serve children from a variety of religious backgrounds, we maintain religious neutrality. *Religious holidays are honored as family traditions and are not celebrated at the NMSU SFYC.*

Family involvement is an integral part of our program and is based on mutual respect and clear communication between families and teachers. We make every effort to communicate with you regarding your child's activities in the NMSU School for Young Children. We appreciate any information you share with us that will help us interact with and support your child while they are in our care. For instance, it is helpful to know if your child didn't sleep very well the night before or if someone special to the child is currently out of town or visiting. We believe that it is in the best interest of your child for us to work as closely as possible with you.

Program Calendars and Professional Development Days

The SFYC follows the NMSU calendar with some variations (see attached calendars). The classrooms are open on an academic year schedule with specified times for staff professional development. Professional development days are planned for days that are listed as holidays on the student calendar where NMSU employees are required to work, whenever possible. You will be notified at least one month in advance of all professional development days in order for you to make other childcare arrangements. We encourage you to talk with other families and collaborate on childcare arrangements on professional development days.

Professional development days allow staff members to continue on their paths as lifelong learners through workshops and training, to collaborate with teachers from other classrooms or programs, to work on classroom environments, and to catch up on paperwork.

Enrollment Procedures

The NMSU SFYC is currently open to NMSU students, staff, faculty, and siblings from currently enrolled families with limited community spaces available. The NMSU SFYC does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, disability, religion, or sexual orientation for decisions regarding enrollment or hiring. At the time of enrollment parents must:

- Provide the NMSU SFYC a copy of the child's current immunization records.
- Fill out and sign enrollment forms
- Pay a non-refundable enrollment fee (See program director for amount)*
- Tuition is due on the first day of the program, and the fifteenth of each month thereafter, unless other arrangements have been made.*

* As a state funded program these fees do not apply to Roadrunner Pre-K families.

Tuition and Fees

Please see the attached schedule for tuition rates and information regarding application for child care subsidy. The registration fee is charged annually. The registration fee is used to update the equipment and supplies used throughout the year. **Tuition is due on the fifteenth (15th) of each month and is considered late after the 25th of the month.** A \$10 late fee will be charged to tuition paid after the 25th of the month if written alternate payment arrangements have not been made. If you need an alternate payment schedule, please make arrangements with the Director. Tuition is subject to an annual increase. Families will be notified one month in advance of any tuition increase. **Please be aware that your tuition payment secures your child's space in the program. The entire tuition amount is due each month, regardless of your child's attendance.** The only exception to this is if the program needs to close unexpectedly. In that case, you will

receive notification that your tuition has been pro-rated for that month. To determine your place on the sliding scale, you must provide current pay stubs, **or** a copy of your last year's taxes, **or** FAFSA to verify income.

In the event that a family is over one month behind in their tuition payments and no alternate payment schedule has been made, the NMSU SFYC will have to dis-enroll your child. If dis-enrolled, you are still responsible for the tuition balance owed. In the event your regular tuition fees are paid in part or in full through a third party (i.e. CYFD or an employee sponsored plan), the above dis-enrollment policies still apply.

Child Care Services Bureau Contracts

The NMSU SFYC accepts contracts with the NM Child Care Services Bureau to cover all or part of a family's tuition for the program. However, the SFYC does not accept part time enrollment for full day classrooms. For families with part time contracts for which we are reimbursed more than the lowest level on the sliding scale, children may and are encouraged to attend full time. For families whose contracts do not cover the lowest tuition amount, two options are available. Families may pay the difference between the contract and the lowest tuition amount so that their child may attend full time, or they may seek another placement for their child.

In the event that a family has a contract with the NM Child Care Services Bureau that is not renewed, it is the family's responsibility to notify the director to sign a new tuition contract. If the CCSB contract is not renewed and the family does not make appropriate arrangements with the director, the family is responsible for paying tuition for the appropriate time period. If you receive childcare assistance from the NM Child Care Services Bureau for full time care you are only responsible for the co-payment determined by CCSB.

Late Pick-Up Fee

The hours of operation for the NMSU SFYC Full Day Classrooms are 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM. The NMSU Roadrunner Pre-K Sessions ends at 11:45 and 4:15 PM. Your child must be picked up by the applicable closing time. If you pick up your child after our closing time, the following **late fees must be paid to the closing teacher at the time of pick up**, or the next morning. Chronic late pick-ups may result in termination from the program. If you are running late, as a courtesy please call your child's classroom to inform the teachers. This does not, however, exempt you from the late fee.

Late fees are:

- First 15 minutes after closing = \$10
- \$1/minute thereafter

Withdrawing from the NMSU School for Young Children

If it becomes necessary for you to withdraw your child from the NMSU SFYC, you must provide the director with **two weeks advance notice in writing**. This allows us time to contact other families to fill the spot. If notice is not given, you will be charged two weeks tuition.

The NMSU SFYC is committed to supporting a wide variety of children and families, and working through issues raised by families regarding program quality. There may be, however, some families for whom our program is not a good fit. If it becomes apparent that the fit between your family and our program is not a good one and steps to remedy the situation are not fruitful, it may be necessary for the NMSU SFYC to dis-enroll your child. If we dis-enroll your child for any reason you will be given at least two-weeks notice to make alternate care arrangements. If you have pre-paid tuition beyond the two-week notice period, it will be refunded to you.

Daily Operations

Arrival & Departure

All family drivers are requested to use the loading zone on Williams or the 10 minute drop off/pick up spaces in Myrna's Children's Village parking lot for arrival and departure. When arriving with children, please walk them all the way into the classroom, enter the time and your initials on the sign-in sheet, and greet one of the teachers. **For safety reasons, children are not allowed to enter or exit the classroom unescorted.** To protect the children's safety, we cannot allow them to leave the school with anyone other than their immediate family members or other individuals who have been authorized by the family to pick up the child. If you would like someone to pick up your child, please make sure that person is listed on your child's enrollment form. Please let us know if there is anyone who should **never** pick up your child. If appropriate, please make sure that we have copies of custody agreements and/or other legal documents that will help us keep your child safe. Individuals who pick up your child who are unfamiliar to your child's teacher, even if authorized, will be asked to show identification. Late pick-ups will result in an additional fee. Please see the fees section of this handbook for more information.

If you or another designated adult arrive to pick up your child and the staff feels that you or the other adult appear to be intoxicated or under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the staff will assist you in finding alternate transportation from the program. As a parent/legal guardian, if you insist on taking your child, we cannot stop you unless we have a restraining order or other legal document that allows us to do so. It is our responsibility to always act in the best interest of you and your child. If you insist upon removing your child from the program and appear to be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, the staff present will call the police and file an incident report with the program.

When picking up your child, **please finish all cell phone conversations before entering the classroom.** Take a few moments to check the Family Information Board and your child's cubby for any announcements and/or items that are ready to go home. If you need to answer your phone while you are in the room, please step into the office or outside to take your call.

Saying Good-bye

We understand that this transition can be hard for children and their families. As hard as it can be to say good-bye, we feel that it is **very** important for you to let your child know that you are leaving and that you (or another familiar person) will be back to pick them up. We discourage "sneaking away" when your child is involved in an activity. When this happens, it is very upsetting for the child; it undermines their sense of trust and may cause them to feel insecure. We recommend that you and your child create a routine for saying good-bye, such as waving from a window. Creating a routine will help you and your child transition into the program each day. Please let the staff know how we can support you and your child in your good-bye routine.

Absences

Please call us **as soon as possible** when your child will be absent, or arrive to school later than their usual time. The other children are often concerned when their friends don't come to school and it helps if we can explain the situation to them. We also need this information to plan for meals and activities. **If a child misses more than five consecutive days and we have not heard from the child's family, we will assume that the family has withdrawn from the program and we will offer their space to the next child on our waiting list.** Please remember that our tuition agreement requires two weeks notice before withdrawing a child. You will owe tuition for two weeks, beginning the first day of your child's five consecutive absences.

Curriculum

The curriculum at the NMSU SFYC is Attachment Based, as well as Reggio Inspired. We believe that children need to be involved in close, trusting relationships with their teachers so they feel safe and secure when exploring their environment and learning about their world. In this spirit, we work closely with each child's family to establish a relationship that gives the child a secure base from which to explore and learn. We believe that curriculum is about "respecting and responding to each child's needs in warm sensitive ways that promote attachment and development" (Gonzalez-Mena & Widmyer-Eyer, *Infants, Toddlers, and Caregivers*, 2001, p.3).

Our curriculum is also influenced by our study of the Pre-Primary schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, considered to be among the best schools in the world. The Reggio approach encourages us to consider children as strong, capable and competent, teachers as researchers and guides, the environment as one of the teachers, and families as an integral and valuable part of the educational experience. We are also encouraged to focus on the role of relationships and reciprocal interactions, on curriculum as a process of inviting and sustaining learning and on the projects which emerge from the children's ideas and/or teacher's intentions, and in the power of documentation for capturing memories, stimulating learning, and informing others of our work.

The NMSU SFYC classroom environments are organized into interest areas that provide many opportunities for learning and integrating a variety of skills. The environments are organized to reflect elements of the child's world and provide a vehicle for exploring integrated concepts. The main interest areas of the NMSU SFYC are the Block Area, Dramatic Play Area, Art Area, Reading Area, Manipulative Area, Sensory Play Area, and the Outdoor Play Area. Language development is incorporated into all interest areas. Each classroom also has a studio that allows for small groups to meet around topics of mutual interest.

Daily Schedule

Our schedule is *consistent* in that events happen in the same order every day and *flexible* in that we may extend or shorten events to meet the needs of the children as individuals and as a group. The following is a general order of events that will be adjusted as needed throughout the year to address children's needs. **Our day includes:**

- **Arrival** - Staff greets children and families warmly. This is an opportunity to exchange important information regarding the child, family and program. This also allows teachers to complete a brief health inspection of each child as he/she comes in.
- **Circle Time/Group Meeting Time** - A few songs and/or stories are shared to welcome everyone into the program. The plan for the day is discussed and news from home is shared.
- **Free Choice and Small Group Experiences** - As Reggio inspired educators; we structure the environment to exist as the "third teacher." Within the environment, many activities are available for children to experience and explore. In addition, the teachers have focused activities for small groups of children to extend learning in particular areas of development. Information for planning is derived from observations of children and information shared by families.
- **Outdoor Play & Experiences** - Children have the opportunity to engage in large motor play activities while they experience the outdoor environment. In addition to large motor activities, a variety of sensory, literacy, and art activities are available in the outdoor environment.
- **Lunch (Full Day Only)** - Nutritious food meeting CACFP requirements is served in a relaxed, family style, setting. Conversation among peers and with adults is encouraged.
- **Rest/Quiet Time (Full Day Only)** - Children will have the opportunity to relax, after a busy morning. Children who need to, or choose to sleep, have the opportunity to do so. Children who do not fall asleep have the opportunity to read books, complete puzzles and engage in other quiet, restful activities while their friends sleep.
- **Snack** - Snack is available in the morning and afternoon. All snacks meet CACFP requirements and an adult is available to assist children as needed. Conversation among peers and with adults is encouraged. Snack will be approached differently in each classroom. Speak with your child's teachers for specific information.

- **Departure** - Families are greeted warmly and welcomed into the environment as the child and staff shares the events of the day with the child's family. While children are transitioning out of the program, there are several learning choices and opportunities for small group, focused learning for the remaining children. Please make sure to arrive at least 5 minutes before the closing time for your child's classroom to allow you to speak to the teachers and gather your child's belongings before the classroom closes.

Field Trips

We occasionally take walking trips to places of interest on campus and nature walks around the immediate area of our site. If we are leaving the immediate area of the program site, you will be notified beforehand. If you prefer that your child not take part in these walking trips, please indicate this on your enrollment form and we will make appropriate arrangements.

If we plan an off campus field trip, you will be given a separate permission form to sign. You are welcomed and encouraged to participate in any field trip or walk that we take on or off campus.

Guidance

The NMSU School for Young Children staff strives to create an environment where self-control and the ability to make constructive choices are encouraged. For this reason, we do not use punitive methods of controlling children (corporal punishment, humiliation, verbal abuse, deprivation of basic needs, time out, etc.) **We view guidance as a set of positive, constructive methods for encouraging the child's growth towards self-regulation.** In our program, we encourage the children to make positive choices for their behavior, rather than telling them what not to do. Both expectations of the child's behavior and positive guidance practices are based on knowledge of child development.

Consequences for mistaken behaviors are non-punitive and are directly related to the behaviors in question (i.e. if a child continues to throw objects that are not meant to be thrown, such as wooden blocks, after showing the child a few times various ways to use the object safely, the child will be given an object that is safe to throw, since that seems to be the action in which they are interested.) The focus is on children learning about their world in a safe manner. Children are free to explore objects and their many creative uses, within safe limits. (See *The Power of Guidance: Teaching Social-Emotional skills in Early Childhood Classrooms* by Dan Gartrell. in our resource library).

Biting and other aggressive behaviors (hitting, pulling hair) can be a common occurrence in groups of Toddlers and Preschoolers. At this stage, children are learning about social behaviors and often do not have the words to express their feelings or they forget the appropriate words when they are frustrated. At these times, the frustration of not being able to express themselves verbally sometimes results in aggressive behaviors. At the NMSU SFYC, we view biting/hitting as a behavior that is a natural part of the early childhood years. We also understand that finding out that your child bit or hit someone else can be very distressing. Please know that the staff of the NMSU SFYC will do everything we can to determine the cause of the aggressive behavior and help your child learn constructive ways to get his/her needs met. We are committed to working with families in the best interest of their child's development. In this spirit, **we do not remove children from the program for biting or exhibiting aggressive behavior that falls within the limits of typical behavior for their developmental stage.**

We also understand that it is very distressing to find out that your child has been on the receiving end of an aggressive act, such as biting or hitting. Please know that we comfort the hurt child immediately and take measures to help him/her feel safe in the environment. We encourage children to express their feelings about the incident, as they are able. For example, if a child is bitten, we will attempt to verbalize what the child might be feeling. We might say something like, "That looks like it hurts. Does it hurt? I'll bet you didn't like that. If someone is hurting you, you can tell him/her to stop or you can tell him/her not to bite you again. Do you want

to tell them not to bite you anymore?” With a younger child, we will model an appropriate response, so they will have an idea of what kinds of words to use when they have the skills to express feelings verbally.

If you have any questions or concerns about how we handle biting, hitting, or any other aggressive behavior, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Meals and Snacks

The NMSU SFYC serves breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack (full day classes only) each day. An adult will be available at the table to assist children as needed and children are encouraged to assist each other as much as possible. Snacks and meals conform to the meal plan required by the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The staff of the SFYC feels that the meals and snacks provided are generally healthy and nutritious. **If you would prefer your child to eat other foods than those provided by the program, please inform us of your preferences.** In cases of medical or religious reasons, the SFYC may be able to provide substitutions. For all other reasons (picky eater, desire for organic foods, etc.) you will be required to provide the substitution. Food you provide will be stored safely until consumed.

Currently the Las Cruces Public Schools provides our meals. Menus may be found on their website <http://www.lcps.k12.nm.us/>. On days when this meal service is not available, you will be asked to provide a lunch for your child.

It is important that we receive an Income Eligibility Application for the CACFP from you. This form will be treated as confidential information. Determination of eligibility category affects the amount of federal funding we receive for the meals served to the children in our program. All children in attendance will be offered the same meals at no separate charge without physical segregation of, or other discriminatory action against any child and adult because of race, color, age, national origin, sex, disability, or ability to pay.

Clothing

We recommend comfortable, easily washable clothing for school so that children may be active and participate in potentially messy activities (such as finger-painting) without worrying about clothing.

Footwear is also important for children’s safety. We recommend **athletic shoes** with laces or Velcro closures as the best shoes for active play. If your child desires to wear party shoes, boots or sandals, please ensure that they have rubber soles for adequate traction while playing outside, or provide alternative footwear for active experiences.

We ask that you **label** your child’s sweaters, coats, hats and gloves with his/her initials. Please bring a complete change of clothes on your child’s first day, in the event he/she needs dry clothes (shoes, pants, socks and underwear-if applicable). Even children who do not have toileting accidents sometimes need dry clothes for other reasons. Label clothes and place in a labeled sack. We will return clothes at the end of the season.

Diapering and Toilet Learning

If your child is currently wearing diapers, **please bring one package of diapers and one package of wipes on the first day of the program.** We will notify you as soon as possible if it looks like we are running low on your child’s supply of diapers and wipes. We appreciate your efforts to replenish your child’s supply of diapers and wipes in a timely manner.

If you are currently transitioning your child from diapers to using the toilet, please let us know. It is important for us to know how you handle toileting at home so our practices are consistent. Consistency makes the process much easier for the child (and adults) involved. As we notice your child exhibiting signs of toileting readiness, we will discuss our observations with you so we can work together to make the process consistent and comfortable for you and your child. We will do everything we can to support your family’s process and we

have many resources about toileting readiness and other toilet learning issues in our Family Lending Library if you are interested.

Toys from Home

We realize that for many children the NMSU SFYC is their first experience in a group education and care environment. We understand if your child will be more comfortable if he/she has a stuffed animal, blanket, or other object that helps them in his/her transition from home to the program. **We request that you limit your child's comfort/transition object to one item and that the item is labeled with your child's first and last name or initials.** It is very challenging for the staff to keep track of multiple comfort items. Please discourage your child from bringing other toys to school. We will do everything we can to keep track of items your child brings from home, and please be aware that items occasionally become broken or lost during the course of the day. If toys from home become a distraction to the program, or look like they are in danger of being broken, children may be asked to leave them in their cubbies or at home. **Please refrain from bringing guns or any type of war/violent toys to school.**

Rest Time (Full day children)

There will be a rest period every day after lunch. We have very active mornings and even children who do not need sleep will have the opportunity to rest and relax so they have energy to participate in the afternoon activities. Quiet activities will be provided for children who do not sleep during rest time. Cots are provided for your children and each child will use the same cot every day. **Please bring a crib sheet to cover the cot and a small blanket for your child's comfort during naptime.** Your child is also welcome to bring a stuffed animal or other special comfort item with which to sleep. If the items become a distraction, we may ask the child to return it to his/her cubby. We will return the sheet and blanket to you at the end of each week so they can be washed and returned at the beginning of the next week. Every cot will be sanitized at the end of each week, or more often if needed.

Things to Bring on your child's first day . . .

1. Enrollment Forms and Immunization Records (**We cannot care for your child until we have these records on file!**)
2. Child Care Center Physician's Report
3. Crib sheet, small pillow, and/or small blanket for rest time (If applicable). Please do not bring large blankets, pillows, sleeping bags or quilts as we have limited storage space.
4. Summer book to share in the classroom
5. First tuition payment
6. Sunscreen/Lotion/Topical Medication Permission form (attached to family handbook) (if needed)
7. Signed Family Handbook Signature Page
8. At least one complete change of clothes
9. Diapers and wipes (if needed)

Birthdays

A child's birthday is a special occasion for the family and the classroom community. We invite you to join your child at school during his or her special birthday celebration. Families are welcome to bring a special nutritious snack or do a special activity to celebrate their child's birthday. In order to model good nutrition

habits and avoid problems for children on restricted diets, birthday cakes, cupcakes, sugary cookies, and ice cream are not recommended. Instead we suggest the following festive possibilities:

- Fruit smoothies
- Muffins (no icing)
- Banana, carrot or zucchini bread
- Oatmeal cookies
- Fruit Salad

All foods shared at school must be commercially prepared.

Special activities possibilities:

- Read/bring your child's favorite book
- Bring/sing a special song
- Share stories of your child's life
- Other festive activities

Please discuss your birthday snack ideas with the staff ahead of time. Birthday presents are not exchanged at the NMSU SFYC.

If you wish to invite children from the NMSU SFYC to a private birthday party, please do so by phone or mail. **Do not use the classroom cubbies unless you are planning to invite all of the children in the class.** The children's feelings are easily hurt if they do not receive an invitation in their cubby.

Holidays

The NMSU SFYC serves children and families representing a wide variety of nationalities, religions, languages, and culture groups. In our attempt to foster self-esteem and positive self-identity in all our children, much thought, development, research and experience have been incorporated in the development of our approach toward holidays. Holidays are de-emphasized at the NMSU SFYC and not celebrated in the traditional sense. Although programs for young children in the US have had a history of using holidays as vehicles through which to teach the curriculum, professionals in the field of early childhood education now seriously question this practice across the country. Some of the reasons that early educators recommend a shift in emphasis away from school holiday celebrations are:

- Young children are just beginning to experience the holiday traditions of their families. When a school or classroom celebrates a holiday, it tends to send a powerful social message to children that this is the correct way (and event) to celebrate, thereby potentially undermining the values and traditions the families are attempting to build.
- Many holidays that appear secular in nature to most Americans are perceived by members of other cultures to be based on religious concepts that conflict with their own. Therefore they feel uncomfortable sending their children to school during those holiday celebrations. Halloween and Valentine's Day are some examples of these.
- Holiday celebrations that emphasize the celebrations of the most dominant cultures in schools neglect the self-identity needs of the students who don't participate in that event.
- School programs that attempt to celebrate the holidays of all cultures represented find that their curriculum becomes completely driven by holidays, and that there is great difficulty in transmitting the concepts authentically and meaningfully.
- Holiday seasons that are celebrated in the dominant culture can create a lot of stress in families and communities. Young children are very susceptible to this stress. The additional stress of school holiday preparations often result in behavior changes in the children including crying and exhibitions of insecurity.

The philosophy of the NMSU SFYC with regard to holidays is based on the following concepts:

- All families should be comfortable bringing their children to the program every day without feeling that program events will negatively impact their child's self-esteem.
- All children and staff should feel comfortable talking about their family celebrations and sharing information about their beliefs. This type of sharing can take place in the normal routines of the classroom.
- Holidays celebrated by various cultures tend to have common underlying themes such as: the joy of coming together as a family, the value of friendship, the changing of seasons, the role of foods and music, etc. Periodically, the NMSU SFYC may invite families to participate in an event that focuses on one of these themes, but not as a celebration of a specific holiday.
- Young children are just beginning to learn about holidays and traditions. School celebrations are often out of context, and lack meaning for the young child.
- The NMSU SFYC curriculum is designed to reduce rather than increase stress in the lives of children and their families.

“Children are wonderful, messy little scientists who come to us, eyes lit bright with wonder, all their senses open and their motors running. Children need a laboratory that encourages hands-on active learning, exploration, and discovery, alongside caring and sensitive adults.”

Jim Greenman

“What children learn does not follow as an automatic result from what is taught. Rather, it is in large part due to children's own doing as a consequence of their activities and our resources - so it is that in many situations, especially when one sets up challenges, children show us they know how to walk along the path to understanding. Once children are helped to perceive themselves as authors or inventors, once they are helped to discover the pleasure of inquiry, their motivation and interest explode.”

Loris Malaguzzi

Health and Safety

Illness

Please notify the NMSU SFYC ***immediately*** if your child has contracted a communicable disease, i.e. chicken pox, head lice, ringworm, impetigo, pink eye, strep throat, etc. so we can notify other parents.

Please keep your child home if he/she has:

- had a fever within the last 24 hours (100° oral / or 100.3° armpit)
- vomited or had diarrhea in the past 24 hours
- a cold that is less than two days old
- a heavy nasal discharge
- a congested cough
- symptoms of a possible communicable illness (sneezing, reddened eyes, sore in the mouth, sore throat, headache, abdominal pain)

Your child may return to the program when they have been **symptom free for 24 hours, *without medication.*** If you are not sure if your child is well enough to return to the program, please call us and/or your child's physician for advice.

Notification when child is ill

Children who become ill at school will be sent home. It is important that you arrange to have your child picked up within an hour of the NMSU SFYC notifying you of your child's symptoms. We first attempt to contact the parents or primary guardians to pick up the child. If we cannot reach you, we will call the emergency contact numbers on your enrollment form so that one of those designated people can pick up your child. ***Please make sure these emergency contacts know that they may be asked to pick up your child from school in any emergency in which you cannot be located. If child is showing symptoms of contagious illness, he/she will be isolated from other children under supervision of a staff member.***

Medication

If a child requires medication during school hours, the parent/guardian is required to bring the medicine to the teacher in the original container. Children are not to carry medication with them. When bringing medication for administration during school hours, please observe the following procedures:

1. Ask for a "Medication Administration" form.
2. Complete the form and give it and the medication to one of the full time staff.
3. The staff person will review the form and ask you for any clarification on administration procedures.
4. The staff person will lock the medication in the medicine box in the cabinet, or in the refrigerator, depending on instruction.
5. When administering the medication, the staff member will sign the form and note the time administered. Please check this form when you arrive to pick up your child, ask the staff member that administered the medication any questions you might have, and then initial the form in the last column.

Injury Response

If a child, adult, or staff member sustains a minor injury while at the NMSU SFYC, an accident report form will be completed, and in the case of a child, the parent will receive a copy of the accident form in the child's cubby describing the incident and the care given.

If a child, adult, or staff member sustains a serious injury, the parent/guardian or emergency contact persons will be notified immediately. If necessary, the teachers will call 911 and the child or adult will be transported to the hospital by ambulance.

Sunscreen, Lotions, and Topical Medication

If you would like your child to wear sunscreen during their time in the program, we would prefer for you to apply the first application of sunscreen in the morning *before* your child arrives. If you want us to re-apply sunscreen later in the day, please bring us a bottle of sunscreen **labeled with your child's first and last name in permanent marker on a piece of masking tape** (for some reason permanent marker wears off of the sunscreen bottles), with the completed, signed permission form at the end of this handbook. The sunscreen must be in the original container.

If your child needs special lotion, diaper rash cream, or other topical medication during their time in the program, please complete and sign the sunscreen/lotion/topical medication permission form at the end of this handbook and bring it with the lotion/medication. The lotion/medication must be in the original container and labeled with your child's first and last name in permanent marker.

Missing Child Policy

1. The NMSU SFYC staff will know the whereabouts of all enrolled children during the official service hours.
2. Any absence of 5 minutes without contact with a child will signal a search for the child.
3. Before commencing the search, the teachers will ask the other children the whereabouts of the missing child.
4. The initial grounds search will include the entire NMSU SFYC and a search of the outdoor play area.
5. If the child is not located, then the campus police will be notified and the continuation of the search will be expanded to include surrounding offices, buildings and outdoor areas.
6. In a classroom situation, two staff members will stay with the children left in the group and one will respond to the emergency at hand.

Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

The NMSU SFYC staff is required by New Mexico regulations for the Licensing of Child Care Facilities to observe the children daily for indications of abuse and/or neglect. Everyone in New Mexico is required by state law (Section 32-1-15, NMSA 1978) to report any incident of suspected child abuse or neglect to the NM Department of Human Services. The staff must also notify the director and/or the Children's Village faculty liaison of the report to Human Services.

Anyone making a report of suspected child abuse or neglect is presumed to be acting in good faith and shall be immune, under state law, from liability, civil or criminal, unless that person acted in bad faith or with malicious purpose.

According to the New Mexico regulations for the Licensing of Child Care Facilities (revision 2/14/05), licensed child care programs must report “. . . any observations of recent bruises, bites, or

signs of potential abuse or neglect to the parent or guardian.” The only exception to this policy is if Child Protective Services advises us against notifying the family of the suspected abuse.

Please know that our relationship with you and your child is the foundation of our program. We are here to support you in the joys and struggles of raising a young child. Please let us know when you are experiencing challenging times and we will connect you with appropriate resources, in addition to whatever emotional support we are able to provide you and your child. If you would like more information on our abuse & neglect reporting policies and procedures, please talk with the director and she will provide them for you.

Severe Weather Policy and Emergency Evacuation Procedures

In case of severe weather, please follow these instructions:

- Check your e-mail or the NMSU website for updates any delays or closures of main campus.
- Listen to the radio or television for information regarding the LCPS schedule. **We follow LCPS school delays and closures.**

If unexpected bad weather occurs during the school day we will contact you immediately to pick up your child. If you are unable to pick up your child, please designate someone else for us to contact. If we need to evacuate the Myrna’s Children’s Village with your child, we will adhere to the following evacuation plan:

1. If we are required to evacuate the Myrna’s Children’s Village, we walk to the Aggie Express store on Williams and Standley Drive (646-7788).
2. If we are required to evacuate the Aggie Express, we will walk to NMSU Corbett Center (646-4411).
3. If we are required to evacuate the NMSU campus, NMSU emergency services will provide transportation to St. Albert the Newman Center (2615 S. Solano Drive, Las Cruces, NM 88001 (522-6202)).
4. If we are required to evacuate the Newman Center, NMSU emergency services will provide transportation to La Vida Institute (755 South Telshor, Las Cruces, NM 88011 (527-1149)).

If time permits, we will call you before we are required to evacuate. If we need to evacuate immediately, we will call you as soon as we reach our safe location. **For families trying to reach us as we are evacuating, our current emergency phone number is the director’s cell phone, (575) 635-3296.**

All children are artists. The problem is how to
remain an artist once we grow up.
Pablo Picasso

Family Involvement, Support, and Communication

Become Involved

We value your interests and talents and encourage you to share them in the program. Family members are always welcome in the NMSU SFYC.

Parent involvement may take many forms, according to your preference. Possibilities include:

- Coordinating or participating in the Family Advisory Committee
- Classroom or Field Trip Volunteers
- Facilitating Class Activities with the Children
- Equipment Repairs
- Helping w/ documentation (taping, transcribing, video editing, web page publishing)

Please bring your ideas to a lead teacher and/or check the family bulletin board and newsletter for opportunities to participate.

At the NMSU SFYC, we strive to support families in their role as their child's first teacher. Throughout the year, we will inform you of workshops and parenting classes that may be of interest to you. We also have a Family Resource Library with books, articles, and movies on many topics. If there are specific topics that you would like information about, such as toileting, nutrition, or positive guidance, we would be more than happy to find materials that will help you or plan workshops to meet the specific needs of families in the program.

Family Conferences / Home visits

Families are encouraged to make an appointment for a home visit before their child's first day of school. We are happy to meet with you at any time to discuss your child's growth and development. Formal conferences will be offered to each family during each semester to share our observations and experiences of your child's growth and development. Please look for a sign up sheet on the family bulletin board toward the end of the semester.

Communication

There are many opportunities for program staff and families to communicate with each other regarding the children and other aspects of the program. There is a family bulletin board where menus, the daily schedule, and other important information are posted. There is also a periodic newsletter, which will publish general program information, including any upcoming special events. Another opportunity for communication is our Daily Logs. During the week, your child's teachers will use anecdotes, reflections, and photos to share with you our daily class experiences. We also welcome frequent conversations with you. If you have an important issue to discuss, please let us know so we can find time and space away from the children in order to give your issue the full attention it deserves.

Family Concerns

It is our philosophy that families and teachers are partners in each child's growth and development. Please know that we respect and value your contributions to our program. Your ideas and concerns are extremely important.

Families are asked to observe the following steps if they have a concern about their child or the program.

1. As soon as you have a concern about your child or your child's classroom, please schedule an immediate appointment with the classroom teacher(s) to discuss it. At that time, clarify your concerns with the teacher(s) so they can help you and your child.
2. If, after a conference with the teachers, the concern is not resolved, please make an appointment with the director. Based on the results of that meeting, a plan of action will be developed with the family members, teachers, and director to resolve the concern in the best interest of the child.
3. If you have a concern about the program, please schedule an appointment with the director to discuss it. At that time, clarify your concerns with the director so she can resolve the issue as effectively as possible.
4. In either case, if the situation is still not resolved to your satisfaction, please contact the Children's Village faculty liaison. She will meet with all parties involved to mediate a solution that will be in the best interest of the child and resolve the concern.

Family Advocacy Council

In our efforts to create a strong and lasting partnership with the families in the NMSU SFYC, we have established a Family Advocacy Council (FAC). The purpose of this committee is for families to have direct input into the policies and procedures of the program that effect families. The FAC can meet monthly, every other month, or as often as needed. The FAC may be consulted on a variety of issues such as, changes in program policies and procedures, hiring of new staff, family involvement activities, and family workshops/parenting support class topics.

The Family Advocacy Council members can include anyone in your family who plays an active role in your child's life who is interested in participating. This includes parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and close family friends.

Inappropriate Behavior (Adults)

Inappropriate behavior includes but is not limited to the following:

- Physically assaulting a child or adult
- Throwing objects at or toward a child or adult, especially in anger or frustration
- Yelling at a child or adult, especially in anger or frustration
- Using profane language in the classroom, or anywhere else children are present
- Directing profane language at a child or adult
- Behavior that is perceived as intimidating and/or threatening by another person and/or witnesses
- Blatant disrespect of SFYC staff and/or policies
- Encouraging a child or adult's violent, disruptive, or abusive behavior
- Disregard for other people or property
- Any other behavior that is considered socially unacceptable

In all cases of inappropriate behavior, our primary goal is to resolve the situation to ensure the safety of the classroom environment and community.

Procedures and consequences: **Any person who sees a staff member, family member, or other adult engaged in inappropriate behavior of a violent, threatening, and/or abusive nature will contact the NMSU Police Department *immediately* and follow the instructions of the NMSU**

Police Department. In all cases of inappropriate behavior, the senior staff member involved will complete an incident report and submit it to the director and/or the Children's Village faculty liaison as soon as possible. The director and/or the faculty liaison will investigate the alleged incident with the witnessing party, the party involved, and any other witnesses in a time period appropriate to the situation. If the person exhibiting the inappropriate behavior is an NMSU/DACC student, Student Services will be contacted and we will proceed according to their recommendations.

Some situations are resolved easily and quickly. Other situations, especially those involving violence or extreme anger, may require a cool down period for everyone involved. Temporary decisions may be made to ensure the safety of everyone involved during the cool down/investigation period. Depending on the results of the investigation and/or recommendation of the police (if applicable), appropriate disciplinary action will be taken (up to and including termination for staff, up to and including dis-enrollment of child or restricted access to the Myrna's Children's Village for families/other adults).

If the severity of the behavior does not warrant termination, dis-enrollment, or restricted access, the person/people involved will meet with the director to discuss how the behavior will be corrected (anger management classes, parenting classes, participation in Alcoholics Anonymous, etc.). At this time, the individual(s) involved will develop a contract with the director stating the agreed correction, a reasonable timeline for completion, and the consequences, should the contract be violated. The director will follow up to ensure that the contract is followed.

Any incident involving inappropriate behavior in caring for a child shall be reported to the family once the investigation has been completed and/or within 24 hours by the director. The time and nature of the incident, as well as what was done to correct the incident, shall be reported to the family.

Sexual Harassment/Gender Discrimination:

The NMSU Policy & Procedure Manual, Section 3.94, defines Sexual Harassment/Gender Discrimination as the following:

According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the U.S. Office for Civil Rights, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or academic progress; (2) student's educational pursuits are adversely impacted; (3) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for academic or employment decisions affecting such individual; (4) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic or work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or learning environment. Harassing conduct based on gender often is sexual in nature, but sometimes is not. Any unwelcome conduct based on gender is also forbidden by this policy regardless of whether the individual engaged in harassment and the individual being harassed are of the same or different gender. Common forms of harassment include offensive or abusive physical contact, joking, lewd language, suggesting sexual favors, displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, magazines, calendars, etc. (Chapter 3, page 31).

This policy is applicable to NMSU staff, students, and families. For more information on this issue, please see <http://www.nmsu.edu/manual/Chapter%203.pdf> . If you feel you are being harassed, discriminated against, or are in a hostile environment, PLEASE let the director know **IMMEDIATELY**. If you feel the Director is responsible for the acts described above, contact the Children's Village Faculty liaison **IMMEDIATELY**. This behavior is unacceptable within the NMSU SFYC and New Mexico State University. Consequences for these behaviors range from formal reprimand to termination as determined by the NMSU Equal Employment Opportunity office. If the accused party is a student, Student Services will be contacted and we will proceed according to their recommendations.

Signature Page

After you have read the NMSU SFYC Family Handbook please complete this form and return it by the first day of class. Thank you.

I have read the Family Handbook in its entirety and understand it. I agree to abide by the policies described within.

Name _____

Relationship to child _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Staff Use Only

Date Received: Date Form expires: