



# *La Escuelita*

A Preschool Collaborative  
Parent Handbook  
2014—2015 School Year



**HISPANIC CENTER**  
OF WESTERN MICHIGAN



Funded by the Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative  
& housed at San Juan Diego Academy, *La Escuelita* is a free  
bilingual preschool providing high quality early education  
to ensure that all children in our  
neighborhood are ready for kindergarten.

# Welcome!

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# Program Philosophy

*La Escuelita's* program philosophy encompasses the vision and mission of its three partnering organizations: the Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative, the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan, and San Juan Diego Academy.

The Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative (ELNC), paired with the expertise of community-based organizations, the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan and San Juan Diego Academy, is vested in changing the current reality of vulnerable children. In order to create this change, ELNC has designed and is currently implementing through this partnership *La Escuelita*, an intentional preschool aimed at providing, expanding, and sustaining the capacity of high quality early education in the vulnerable West HOPE Zone neighborhood of Grand Rapids. The partnership envisions a community where all children, regardless of the neighborhood in which they live, are able to thrive developmentally and educationally, allowing them to fully embrace their potential and become self-sufficient adults.

*La Escuelita's* core values are:

- **Outcomes:** We ensure our children develop and are educated, by evidence of their increasing knowledge, skills, and abilities.
- **Cultural Competence:** Children develop and grow best in ways that are consistent with the cultural rhythms and patterns of their families.
- **Creativity and Innovation:** We continually strive to find new and different objectives, strategies, and activities to help our children thrive.
- **Place-Based:** The best environment for early education is rooted in the local history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art.

As a developmentally appropriate program, *La Escuelita* includes instruction and activities for the promotion of physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development, through the use of Creative Curriculum© materials and standards. This curriculum ensures that children have the opportunity for quiet and active play; activities individually or in groups; activities for large and small muscle development; to initiate activities; daily language and literacy experiences; and early math and science experiences. Children have the opportunity to feel successful and good about themselves, develop independence, take part in creative activities, learn new ideas and skills, and participate in imaginative play.

# Important Policies

**Inclusion of People with Special Needs:** *La Escuelita* strives to provide quality services to all children and families, including full inclusion of people with special needs. In accordance with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA P L 101-336), *La Escuelita* policies and procedures are intended to eliminate barriers to program services or facilities. If you have special needs in order to fully participate (wheelchair access, Braille, TDD phone services), please notify our Director at (616) 742-0200 x152, or your child's teacher.

**Non-Discrimination Statement:** *La Escuelita* does not discriminate in any way, including on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, religion, sex, age, or disability.

**Child Abuse and Neglect Policy:** *La Escuelita*, like all public schools and other social service providers, must report suspected child abuse and neglect. Community resources are often available to help parents and families under stress. *La Escuelita* staff is trained to support families who are aware of child abuse or neglect. *La Escuelita* staff is considered by Child Protective Services to be mandated reporters. Should a staff member suspect child abuse or neglect, they are required to give an oral report to the Department of Social Services immediately, followed by a written report within 72 hours. This is in accordance with Child Protection Law Act No. 238. A copy of the Mandated Reporter's Resource Guide is on file and available at *La Escuelita*.

**Fee Policy:** In order to best serve our community and remove one of the largest barriers to early childhood educational opportunities, *La Escuelita* offers free preschool programming to families whose children meet the Criteria for Admission.

In lieu of a fee-based program, *La Escuelita* asks that parents and families of enrolled children participate in their children's education. Parents and families have the opportunity to volunteer in the classroom throughout the year, to interact with the children and facilitate their learning. We also encourage parents and families to attend monthly Parent Engagement activities designed to further develop a collaborative learning culture within our community.

# Admission & Withdrawal

## Situational Criteria for Admission

Children must meet at least 5 of the following criteria to be eligible for admission:

1. Child lives in the ELNC targeted neighborhood
2. Family income does not exceed limits (see Financial Criteria for Admission)
3. Family was receiving DHS Benefits and was recently cutoff due to new State rules
4. Adult(s) in the family are unemployed
5. Parent(s) do not have a high school diploma or GED certificate
6. English is not the primary language spoken in the home
7. Child has not previously participated in a formal Early Education Program
8. Child has developmental needs
9. Family does not receive a childcare subsidy from any other source
10. Child Protective Services is currently involved or has been involved with the family
11. Parent(s) are currently incarcerated or has been incarcerated in the past

## Financial Criteria for Admission

200% of Poverty Income Guidelines (January 2011) - Consistent with GSRP

# of People in Household	Annual Income (including child support)
2	\$29,420
3	\$37,060
4	\$44,700
5	\$52,340
6	\$59,980
7	\$67,620
8	\$75,260
Add for each additional person:	\$7,640

## Criteria for Withdrawal

*La Escuelita* is an open-enrollment preschool. Parents may withdraw their child from the program at any time. We ask that, upon withdrawal, parents notify the lead teacher.

# Attendance

In order for children and parents to gain the greatest benefit from *La Escuelita's* preschool program, it is necessary for children to attend school regularly, and for school to be a part of children's normal routine.

In order to provide services to families in need of a quality preschool program for their child and who may be on the waiting list, noncompliance with the attendance policy below may result in a child being dropped from the program.

**Excused Absences:** Students are allowed six (6) excused absences during the school year. Examples of excused absences are:

- Illness of the child, parent, or sibling. *Illness lasting more than six (6) consecutive days must be verified by a medical doctor.*
- Medical appointment of the child or other family member
- Family emergency. *This may include a car accident, lack of transportation, death of a family member, etcetera.*
- Severe weather conditions that prohibit travel to and from school
- Official or legal agency appointments. *This may include immigration, court appearances, etcetera.*
- Court-ordered visitation
- Religious and cultural celebrations
- Absence that is in the best interest of the child. For example: vacation, non-court ordered visitation with a parent

**Unexcused Absences:** Students are allowed six (6) unexcused absences during the school year. Examples of unexcused absences are:

- Illness lasting more than six (6) consecutive days that have not been verified by a medical doctor
- Preschool student did not want to go to school
- Parent or child overslept
- Any absence for which a specific reason is not given. *Each student is able to omit four (4) no call no show days throughout the school year.*

More than six (6) days of unexcused absences during the school year will result in dismissal from the preschool program.

# How Services are Provided

*La Escuelita* provides children three-hours in a preschool classroom setting, four days a week. But that's just the beginning—we partner with your whole family through home visits and family activities .

## Home Visits

Home visits are different for each family. They provide time to explore what is happening with your family at home, and with your child in the classroom. We will discuss various topics during home visits including: parenting, community resources, health, and nutrition. *La Escuelita* teachers and staff will work with you to develop, clarify, and achieve the goals you set for yourself and your family. Your input during the home visits is also valuable to teachers to inform their lesson planning.

**Family Activities and Opportunities:** Parents make the difference at *La Escuelita*!

How can parents get involved?

- Home visits
- Volunteer in the classroom
- Provide childcare for a parent who is volunteering in the classroom
- Attend monthly Parent Engagement activities
- Help with the school newsletter
- Read to a child
- Be an advocate for children on local, state, and national levels
- Anything else? Tell us your ideas!!

Family participation is good for the children, good for the program, & good for you!

When you volunteer, you are helping the children and the whole program. Our funders value your participation too, and as a result, the hours you volunteer count almost like money to the program. *La Escuelita* teachers and staff will explain this "in-kind" donation and show you how to keep track of your hours.

Parents are encouraged to volunteer in our classroom. There is a signup sheet for each class on the bulletin board in the hallway. Parents can sign up by writing their name on the day they would like to come volunteer. Volunteers are given a math, science, or art activity to do with the students. Parent volunteers must have a Parent Volunteer Statement on file.



# Schedule of Operation



The *La Escuelita* school year will run from Monday, September 8, 2014 to May 27, 2015. Classes will meet Monday through Thursday, reserving Fridays for teacher planning. Class arrival time at 8am and dismissal time at 3:30pm.

**Drop Off:** Students are dropped off on Leestma Street, at the back entrance to San Juan Diego Academy. Parents get in line at the curb. Teachers wait at the curb and remove the child from the car. Parents wait until the teacher closes the car door before driving away.

**Pick Up:** Parents park on Leestma Street or Lee Street and enter the school at the Leestma Street entrance. Students must be signed out each day. *Only parents or an approved adult will be allowed to pick up a child.*

## Daily Activities

Daily activities will allow students to choose to participate in all of the following:

- Quiet and active play
- Individual, small group, and large group activities
- Child-initiated as well as teacher-initiated play
- Developmentally appropriate language and literacy experiences, including bilingual activities
- Math and science activities
- Dramatic play in a variety of settings
- Large and small motor activities



Teachers design daily activities to ensure that all students have the opportunity to feel successful. Students have opportunities to use materials that encourage creativity as well as social interaction. Teachers initiate activities that encourage students to learn new ideas and skills while developing problem-solving skills. All daily activities are sensitive to the unique cultural background of the child and are designed to scaffold learning in a developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive way.

Technology such as computers, TVs, and other electronic devices will be used in the classroom when they are educationally suitable and age appropriate.

# Daily Schedule

8:00-8:45	Students arrive/Breakfast/Greet Time
8:45-9:00	Large Group Meeting/ Music and Movement
9:00-9:10	Planning Time: Children indicate their plans to adults in a place where intimate conversations can occur and where people and materials are visible.
9:10-10:10	Free Choice: students choose what area to work on. One teacher supervises the art table while the other teacher interacts with students at other centers
10:10-10:20	Clean up
10:20-10:30	Recall :Gathered in small group settings, children choose Work Time experiences to reflect on, talk about, and exhibit
10:30-11:15	Outside time– gross motor play
11:15-11:25	Bathroom/ /Wash hands/ prepare for lunch
11:25-12:10	Lunch/   Dental Hygiene

12:10-1:10	Rest /Quiet Time
1:10-1:40	Wake/Bathroom/ Snack
1:40-1:55	Small Group
1:55-2:05	Planning Time
2:05-2:45	Free Choice-students choose what area to work on. One teacher supervises the art table while the other teacher interacts with students at other centers
2:45-2:55	Clean up
2:55-3:00	Recall
3:00-3:30	Outside time and Dismissal

# Communication

Communication between parents and *La Escuelita* staff is very important. Teachers share the day's highlights with parents every day at pick-up time. This is also a good time for parents to ask questions or share concerns. In addition, monthly bilingual newsletters are sent home so that parents know in advance of upcoming areas of study.



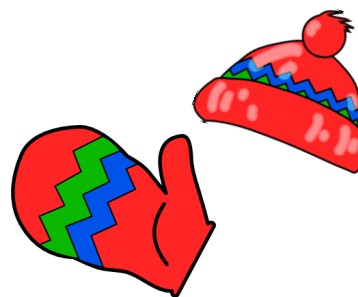
If a parent has a concern, they should first speak with a teacher. If parents feel that the teacher has not adequately answered or addressed the concern, they may contact the Director. If necessary, a meeting can be scheduled to discuss and resolve the problem.

All written communications are bilingual.

# Clothing

Active learning can be messy! During the day students will be painting, climbing, running, and sitting on the floor. Help your child dress appropriately for school:

- Comfortable play clothes are best
- Tennis shoes, or other shoes easy to play in
- A sweater is a good idea when it is chilly
- A warm jacket with a hood or a hat as it gets colder
- During the wintertime, gloves or mittens, and boots



Please mark your child's outerwear with his or her name. We will ask that you provide a change of clothing for your child as well.

# Bad Weather



When San Juan Diego Academy closes due to weather, *La Escuelita* will also close. In the event of a **closing or no school** due to weather, families will look for "**San Juan Diego Academy closed**" on the local TV channels or online. Families can watch for closing information for **San Juan Diego Academy** through the "weather alerts" on local TV channels as well as online. No phone calls will be made to notify families.

# Discipline

*La Escuelita* uses positive discipline methods to encourage self-control, self-direction, self-esteem, and cooperation. When a problem arises, teachers and volunteers help the child to understand the natural consequence of his or her actions. By understanding the consequence, the child is able to make choices that affect their environment positively. If a child is unable to make positive choices, teachers may use redirection to claim the situation. Whenever possible, teachers and volunteers will use positive reinforcement to help students to develop habits that benefit the growth and learning of all students.

Occasionally a child may need to choose a space that is separate from other children in order to calm down. The student will choose this separate place within the classroom and in view of the teachers and classroom volunteers. This thinking time is only long enough to help the child feel in control of the situation.

If natural consequences, redirection, and time to think do not change inappropriate behavior, the teachers will call the child's parents to problem-solve solutions. At no time will teachers or volunteers use physical or verbal punishment.

The following means of punishment may NOT be used at *La Escuelita*:

- Hitting, spanking, shaking, biting, or inflicting other forms of physical punishment
- Restricting a child's movement by binding or taping him or her
- Inflicting mental or emotional punishment, such as humiliating or threatening
- Depriving a child of meals, snacks, rest, or necessary toilet use
- Confining a child in an enclosed area, like a closet, locked room, box, or similar cubicle

# Anti-Bullying

Name-calling, teasing, put-downs, bad language, or acts of aggression designed to hurt someone else are not tolerated at *La Escuelita*. Children demonstrating excessive disruptive behavior that interferes with the learning of other students or that puts other students in danger may be dismissed. Prior to dismissal, teachers will utilize the following procedure:

Personal contacts between parent and teacher, including: a, Notifying the parent of the problem; b, One or more meetings to develop an appropriate resolution to the problem; c, Parent observation of the child in the classroom setting

At a meeting, teachers and parents discuss the possible use of outside resources. Schedule additional observations of the child in the classroom setting.

If, after following the above efforts the problem persists, the child will be dismissed upon the recommendation of the teachers in consultation with the Director.

## Food Service & Nutrition

As a part of *La Escuelita's* healthy eating initiative, all snack served at school have been approved by a Registered Dietitian to be of sufficient quantity and nutrition to provide for the dietary needs of the children. A complete snack list is available on the Parent Information Board in the hallway. *No peanut butter or peanut-based products are served. La Escuelita* staff works with parents to ensure that any child with special dietary needs receives snacks that keep with his or her requirements.



Refrigerated foods meet all Health Department standards for sanitation and storage.

## Health Care Records

At the time of initial attendance, *La Escuelita* must have on file and accessible the following for each child:

- A certificate of immunization showing a minimum of 1 dose of each immunizing agent specified by the Department of Community Health
- OR a copy of a waiver addressed to the Department of Community Health signed by the parent stating immunizations are not being administered due to religious, medical, or other reasons



Within 30 days of initial attendance, *La Escuelita* must have on file a physical evaluation performed within the preceding year signed by a licensed physician or his or her designee. Any restrictions will be noted.

Should a parent object to a physical examination or medical treatment on religious or other grounds, then the parent must provide a signed statement annually stating that the child is in good health and that the parent assumes responsibility for the child's health while at *La Escuelita*.

# Medication



Medication is administered to children only with prior written permission from the parent. Prescription medications must have the pharmacy label indicating the physician's name, child's name, and instructions for administering the medication. *La Escuelita* staff records the date and time that medication is administered to a student. Medication is kept out of reach of children in the program.

## Health Practices & Policies

*La Escuelita* makes every effort to contain the spread of contagious diseases. Staff, students, and visitors to the preschool follow these routines:

- Upon entering the classroom, hands are sanitized using antibacterial hand wash
- Children and staff wash their hands using soap and water, following the posted procedures before eating and after toileting
- Children and staff that are exposed to bodily fluids wash their hands using soap and water, following the posted procedures
- All toys and equipment is sanitized weekly using bleach and air drying
- Equipment, toys, and bedding that have been used by a sick child are cleaned and sanitized before reuse
- Any toy that is put into a child's mouth is set aside and sanitized before reuse
- When a staff member is caring for a sick child or any type of injury that includes a possible exposure to bodily fluids, the staff member uses plastic gloves to reduce the spread of infectious diseases and the spread of blood-borne pathogens

## Illness & Contagious Diseases

*La Escuelita* adheres to the State of Michigan and Kent County guidelines for infectious disease control. Staff asks that parents contact the school if their child contracts an infectious disease, or if he or she will be absent for a long period of time. Children may not attend school if they have had a fever, bad cough, or excessive runny nose. Children should stay home at least 24 hours after they have had a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea. Children should remain home until they are able to participate in all of the program activities.

# Accidents & Illness at School

Parents are notified when the staff observes changes in their child's health or if their child experiences an accident or illness. If a child is too ill to remain in the group, he or she is placed in a separate area and cared for until a parent or other authorized adult arrives.

Any equipment, bedding, toys, etc. used by a sick child is thoroughly cleaned and sanitized before reuse. If the staff feels that a child has contracted an infectious disease, they will notify the child's parents that the child may have been exposed, including the name and symptoms of the possible disease.

*La Escuelita's* staff will make a verbal report to the Department of Health within 24 hours of serious accident, illness, or injury, or a medical condition occurring while a child is in the school's care that results in an emergency medical treatment at a health facility, hospitalization, or death. A copy of the report is kept in file at *La Escuelita*.

## Vision & Hearing Screening

*La Escuelita* works with the Kent County Health Department to ensure that all students participate in vision and hearing screening during the school year. Attendance on the day of the screening is very important, and *La Escuelita's* staff will inform families in advance.

## Oral Health

Students at *La Escuelita* participate in our Oral Health program. Teachers will teach all children in our care how to brush their teeth properly. Each year a dentist or hygienist will visit to give a formal lesson on the importance of teeth brushing and the proper procedures. Each day after eating, teachers will supervise children while brushing their teeth.

Before oral hygiene lessons begin, we will ask parents to sign a permission form, allowing their child to participate in our tooth brushing program.



# Health Related Resources

A wide variety of health related resources are available to parents and caregivers in Kent County, in fields such as physical and mental health care, nutrition, safety, oral health care, and developmental disabilities. When physical, mental, or social health concerns arise for a child or family, *La Escuelita's* staff can assist by ensuring that they are addressed appropriately, often by referring families to these community resources. Parents and caregivers have access to the Parent Center at *La Escuelita*, a resource center that includes health information and a list of available resources in the community. In the Parent Center, you will find information about Kent County's 2-1-1 services, as well as information on infant safe sleep, preschool nutrition, flu and other communicable diseases, immunizations required for preschool, and more.

## Community Resources

*La Escuelita* works with several local organizations to make sure that you and your child have access to the best available community resources:

- **Hispanic Center of Western Michigan:** Immigration advice and assistance, adult education, family support, and more.
- **United Way's 2-1-1 Service:** Free health and human service hotline connecting you to 2,900 services in Kent County, 24/7. Call 1-800-887-1107.
- **Family Outreach Center:** Quality outpatient mental health, substance use disorder, education, prevention, and support services for children, youth, and families in Kent County.
- **Grand Rapids Public Library & Kent District Library:** Obtain a library card and gain access to books, music, movies, and computers for you and your child.

If you would like more information about any of these Community Resources, the teachers and the Director will be happy to help you.



# Transition to Kindergarten

*La Escuelita's* ultimate goal is to ensure that all enrolled children are ready for kindergarten when they graduate from our preschool program. Our curriculum and daily lesson plans are designed with this in mind and teach children the skills they will need to be successful in kindergarten and their extended academic careers.

Throughout the school year, you will receive newsletters with information about child development and activities you can do at home with your child to supplement their classroom learning. You will also meet one-on-one with the teachers three times—one home visit and two parent-teacher conferences. During these interactions, the teachers will speak with you about your goals for your child's education as well as your hopes for their future education. This communication helps teachers to make recommendations for kindergarten transition.

Each school year during the Spring, the teachers take the preschool children to visit the kindergarten classroom at San Juan Diego Academy, to experience kindergarten activities and routines. This provides familiarity with the kindergarten environment and eases the transition process.

You will receive more information from *La Escuelita* about the transition to kindergarten in the spring.

# Parent Engagement Calendar

## Mark your calendars!!

Month	Day	Time	Theme
August	27	5:00-6:00pm	Open House at SJDA Conference
September	25	5:30-7:30 pm	Taste from around the world
October	6	8:00am	Breakfast with Mom
October	23	2:00-3:30pm	Farmers Market/Healthy Eating
November	4	8:00am	Breakfast with Dad
November	18	5:30-7:30pm	Power of Reading & Game Night
December	17	2:00-3:30pm	Winter Science Experiments
January	21	5:30-7:30pm	Cabin Fever/ Gross Motor activities for indoors
February	12	2-3:30pm	Food Love/ Love yourself
March	19	5:30-7:30pm	TBA
April	23	2-3:30pm	Spring is Finally here!
May	27	5:30-7:30pm	Graduation at SJDA gym



# Pest Management Plan

La Escuelita Preschool has a pest management plan when pesticide applications should occur in the building. The plan will include the following:

- The notifications shall specify two methods by which the advance notice of pesticide application will be given ( newsletter/handout/Facebook)
- An advance notice shall contain information about the pesticides, including the target pest or purpose, approximate location, date of the application, contact information at the center, and a toll free number for a national pesticide information center recognized by the Michigan Department of Agriculture.
- Liquid spray or aerosol insecticide application may not be performed in a room at La Escuelita unless the room will be unoccupied by children for no less than 4 hours or longer if required by the pesticide label use directions.