



Philosophy Book

Center Manager: Mindy Gillen

Center Director: Brittanie Lundy

1215 Chanticleer Ave., Santa Cruz, CA 95062
Mailing: 255B Mt. Hermon Road, Scotts Valley, California 95066
Phone: (831)464-1400 Fax: 438-3470 Email: mindy@littleacornsmontessori.com

LITTLE ACORNS MONTESSORI PHILOSOPHY

Little Acorns Montessori (LAM) strives to provide superior care in a loving and learning environment. We provide an enriching program where children from 6 months to 6 years old can develop a strong sense of self-confidence and a high degree of independence. LAM's program seeks to develop the child's natural interest in exploration and observation of the world around her and foster self-esteem and a love of learning that will form the foundation for academic accomplishments.

Our program has been designed to nurture children in every aspect of their development, social, emotional, physical and cognitive. We provide an individualized, self-directed, non-competitive environment to help develop a strong self-image and confidence. Each child is encouraged to learn at his or her own pace. The aim of the program is to foster competent, responsible, adaptive citizens who are life-long learners.

At the heart of the Little Acorns Montessori philosophy are the following:

- **Individualized Learning** Children are free to work at their own pace with materials they have chosen, either alone or with others. The teacher observes each child to determine which new activities, skills or materials to introduce, either to an individual child, or to a small or large group.
- **Respect** Each child deserves to be treated with respect and will gain self-confidence and learn to treat others with respect as a result.
- **Independence** Children are very interested in being able to take care of their own needs and in contributing to their community. We provide child-sized tools and utensils and teach the children to use them so that they can be successful in their independent actions.
- **Prepared Environment** We strive to provide a safe, clean, orderly and beautiful environment. We show respect for and confidence in the children by giving them many "real" and pleasing items to use. We provide a variety of learning materials to nurture the children's natural impulses to learn.
- **Concentration** The experience of being completely engaged in work of interest is very important to the development of an ordered mind. A child will concentrate longer on an activity of her own choosing.
- **Large Blocks of Time** We allow the children time to choose work, problem solve, create new ideas, and finish projects without being interrupted or rushed
- **Learning Through the Senses** Children prepare their minds for abstract thought through concrete experiences. We provide materials that stimulate interest and involvement with an emphasis on the sensory experience. Whenever possible, these materials are self-correcting so that the child can discover the "right answer" without teacher interference, creating a positive and self-esteem raising experience.
- **Social Courtesy** We teach many aspects of appropriate social behavior, including please and thank you, thoughtful food preparation and service, respect for the environment and materials, appropriate greeting, using eye

contact, being a community helper, resolving conflicts peacefully and having empathy for others.

- **Broad Age Grouping** Children from three to six years old share developmental sensitivities, however, each individual gains particular skills at different times. By grouping these ages such differences in development are not highlighted. All children will gain all the skills required, but will do so according to their own internal clock.
- **Absorbant Mind** Children from birth through six years old are able to learn from their environment with incredible ease. Within this time frame children move through stages where they are particularly focused on certain aspects of their development.
 - **0 - 2 years** Physical independence, sensory experience, object permanence
 - **2 - 3 years** Verbal language development, order, independence, large motor coordination, sensorial classification
 - **3 - 6 years** Language, math, logic and sequencing, sense perception, fine motor control, order, social graces, movement and cultural awareness.

CLASSROOM

Our classrooms are organized into interest areas with many carefully designed and engaging activities to foster development.

Sensorial	Sense Perception Sequencing Classification Mental Imaging	Science	Observation Anatomy Concrete Physics Growth Cycles
Language	Pencil Control Phonics Lower Case Symbols Story Development Memory	Culture	Geography Languages Foods, Faces, Clothing
Math	Counting One-to-One Correspondence Symbol Recognition Concrete Fractions Pattern Recognition Problem Solving	Art	Creative Process Fine Motor Skills Intro to Varied Mediums
Imaginary Play	Fantasy vs. Reality Story Development Caretaking	Practical Life	Care of Environment Care of Self Transferring (pouring, spooning) Sorting

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

LAM is staffed by highly skilled and committed professional teachers. Our curriculum has been designed to produce children who are enthusiastic learners, have self-confidence in their abilities, are respectful, feel loved and care for others.

Excitement about Learning We want children to be curious about their world and motivated to seek out answers to their questions. We allow children to make many of their own choices throughout the day, encouraging independent thought and initiative.

Problem Solving and Self-Confidence We want children to have the ability to think constructively and critically. Children are encouraged to think through challenging situations instead of having a teacher deliver a solution. Children are taught that there are many “right answers” and many ways of doing things that work. Children learn to value themselves when they feel the satisfaction of solving a problem or completing an activity.

Responsibility and Independence Children learn responsibility and independence by placing their belongings in their own cubbies and work files, cleaning up activities when they are done using them, cleaning up their own spills or messes, serving themselves at snack time and being considerate of other children in the classroom during activity time.

Foundation for Academic Success We provide many activities which help to develop reading, writing and math skills, fine motor control, logical sequencing, phonics, spatial relation, pattern recognition, memorization and observation. While academic achievements are not our direct goal, we believe that preschool children are uniquely capable of learning and we present a wide variety of academic activities.

Social Skills Children develop appropriate social skills as we provide opportunities for children to help one another and to cooperate and negotiate with their peers on a regular basis. Our teachers are available to model behaviors and help with words or ideas when children need help making friends or solve disputes.

SERVICES

LAM is open from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and provides half day and full day programs for children ages 6 months to 6 years old. We have flexible full and part time schedules with a minimum schedule of 3 half days. We provide nutritious morning and afternoon snacks for all ages. Parents provide their child’s lunch.

Primary Program – The primary program includes children from 3 to 6 years old and encompasses both preschool and kindergarten curriculum. The primary program is open from 7:30am to 6:00pm, Monday through Friday. The structured morning curriculum begins at 9:00am with a learning circle where children are presented with theme-based information, calendar activities and new job demonstrations. The circle is followed by

the work period. Children may do individual activities, participate in individual or small group lessons and eat snack. At 11:15 there is a second circle with more theme-based information, singing and movement. At 11:45 the children go outside for free play and fresh air. Lunch is eaten outdoors, weather permitting, at 12:00. From 1:15 to 2:30pm we have a quiet rest period. Younger children come in to rest at 12:30. In the afternoon the children may choose from a variety of different activities including manipulatives, imaginary play, and group art projects. There is short circle at 4:00 when the children are read to, and engage in guided conversation. Then they have outdoor time.

Toddler Program - The toddler program includes 2 and 3 year olds. The structured morning curriculum begins at 9:00am with a learning circle where children are presented with theme-based information, calendar activities and new job demonstrations. The circle is followed by the work period. Children may do individual activities which have been designed to meet their developmental interests. Snack is available during the morning work period and each child can eat when they are ready. At 10:30 the children go outside for free play and fresh air. At 11:15 we come inside for singing and movement. At 11:30 the children eat lunch. After lunch those children staying all day prepare to lay down. Morning program children get picked up at 12 :15. Toddlers nap from 12:15 until 2:30. In the afternoon the children can choose individual activities as children get up from nap and get clean diapers. There is a circle time with stories, discussion, music and movement. They eat snack together and have some group play time, then join the older children in the yard. In our toddler program we actively support potty training and good hygiene.

Infant Program – Our infant program includes children from 6 months to 24 months old. We have an intimate program and we treat even our youngest children with respect. We provide many opportunities for developmental exploration through materials that invite the children to take an active role. Infants are always held while being fed bottles or being rocked to sleep. We do not use high chairs. As soon as they can sit securely, they join their friends sitting at our infant-sized table. We encourage children to learn to feed themselves and to participate in choosing what foods they will eat.

Custom Care – In order to maintain peace and continuity, we only provide custom “drop-in” care to children currently enrolled or who attended our program previously.

DISCIPLINE PHILOSOPHY

We believe children have a deep need for appropriate boundaries. Order, structure and routine provide feelings of safety, certainty and confidence in children. We present some basic classroom rules. We use the following positive discipline techniques, which help the child learn to manage their own behaviors and never make the child feel humiliated:

- Prevention
- Positive Redirection
- Natural and Logical Consequences

- Talking and Negotiating
- Individual Project or Accompany Teacher

ROLE OF THE TEACHERS

The most important element of any school is the teaching staff. Our teachers carefully plan developmentally appropriate curriculum, presenting new ideas to intrigue and challenge each child in the class. Our teachers create an environment that offers opportunities for the children to explore, discover and grow. The teachers model and reinforce positive behavior and respectful interactions.

Being an early childhood educator can be stressful. A caring and supportive work environment helps to keep teachers from burning out. We keep our teacher to child ratio well below licensing standards. We try to treat our staff with respect and provide them with reasonable wages, health benefits and paid time off. These basic elements of a supportive workplace, which you may take for granted, are not common among preschools, and do add to our cost of operation. While our rates may appear higher than some other centers, they truly reflect the cost of operating a high quality, conveniently located school. Staff salaries make up 70% of our operating costs!

PARENT PARTICIPATION

A child's family is an integral part of the child's total development. We seek to develop a partnership with families to meet the needs of each individual child and to be a resource for parents. We do require 15 hours of Parent Participation per year for two parent families, 7.5 for single parent families.

We cherish the diversity of our families and hope that you will share your knowledge. Parents are invited to share their varied talents and skills at circle time. You can also help in many other ways, including helping with gardening projects or fund raising events, making play dough, presenting special art projects, volunteering to aide the teachers in the classroom or donating classroom or emergency supplies.

We appreciate your sharing cultural background, experiences and traditions, such as foods, music, stories or items used in celebration or in daily life, with us as we explore the cultures of the world in our studies.

NEXT STEPS

We hope this overview of Little Acorns Montessori is helpful to your evaluation process. Please feel free to call our center manager with any further questions.

