Position on Relationships

Our program philosophy is based on the social learning theories of Vygotsky and Bandura. Basically, we recognize that the majority of what is learned is accomplished through discussion and interaction with others. This is why we plan activities and experiences that emphasize collaboration and personal relevance. We understand that home and community cultures play a part in how and what children learn. This is the mental place where children begin their learning.

It is the policy of UHMCC to provide opportunities for parent involvement directly in the classroom. We therefore welcome parents into the classroom to observe and participate at their convenience. We actively seek to create opportunities for parents to interact within the classroom by creating and implementing special cultural activities, chaperoning on trips, or just hanging out and reading to a group of children.

Home visits are offered at the beginning of the school year so the teaching team can develop strong relationships with their family partners, and so that both sides can gain a clearer understanding of home and school cultures. Our program values diversity in practices and opinions, and this gives us a wonderful perspective. Individualized Education Plans are created so that there is alignment between classroom, family, and child goals. Regular two-way communication is provided in formal and informal ways. From this base, mutual respect, trust, and collaboration are developed.

UHMCC also seeks opportunities to work with the larger community to create resources for both parties. While the program works strongly with the various colleges within the University system, particularly the College of Education, the Family Relations section of the College of Tropical Agriculture, and the Center for Hawaiian Knowledge. We also work collaboratively with the Hawaii Association for the Education of Young Children (HAEYC) and its national parent (NAEYC).

UHMCC values mutual respect, trust and democratic collaboration. To foster these values we instituted a program-wide set of community rules:

- We take care of ourselves.
- We take care of each other.
- We take care of the things around us.

Each classroom develops how their micro-community applies these rules in a developmentally appropriate manner. We have program-wide processes, such as conflict management that address both aggressor and victim, to consistently develop emotional awareness, the concept of a safe, supportive community, and the skills involved in defining needs and controlling impulses and emotions. These are all foundations for collaboration. We also focus on the wise use and protection of our resources to create a sustainably healthy community. We define all of our relationships as resources, and these relationships deserve respect and care to ensure a sustainably healthy community.
What It Looks Like By Age

Age 2 to 3
Transitions into the program are often more detailed than is typically needed in the older age bands. These plans are individualized and developed with parents as full partners. The curriculum helps children recognize basic feelings, concepts of right and wrong, and begin to understand the process for conflict mediation that will be used as the child moves through the overall program. Children are encouraged help each other and perform simple jobs in the classroom to develop the habit of contribution. They are also encouraged to express likes and dislikes as they participate in the guidance of learning units and themes. Walking trips are designed to give the child a basic awareness of a larger community. Parent seminars typically focus on typical development and behavior issues.

Age 3 to 4
Families are encouraged to share home and larger-cultural practices, such as food recipes, celebrations, and games. Parents are encouraged share their interests and passions with the class and with the school. Individualized education plans tend to include more goals geared toward cooperation with peers and adults. Awareness of community supports, such as police and fire department, doctors and dentists, are often highlighted. The child also takes on a greater individual responsibility toward the general community rules. Parent seminars typically focus on social issues as well as developmental issues.

Age 4 to 5
At this age level, more detail is usually given to global cultural practices, and families are encouraged to share more of their knowledge and passions. Children take on larger roles and responsibilities for the classroom operation and community interaction. Focus is on building collaboration skills, and conflict mediation becomes more detailed as children are encouraged to guide each other through the process. Parent goals often center on transition to kindergarten, and parent seminars often have a more academic slant to them. Excursions often have a more dynamic, exploratory focus as interconnections between the child and community are highlighted.

Mixed Age
By encouraging parent and community involvement, the potentially wide range of individual needs can be met while still presenting a comprehensive and progressive curriculum. The core ideas surrounding relationships between and among classrooms, program, parents, community, children, and staff permeate our educational environment.

Suggested Reading
• Powerful Interactions: How to Connect with Children to Extend Their Learning by Amy Dombro, Judy Jablon, and Charlotte Stetson.
• Teaching Transformed: Achieving Excellence, Fairness, Inclusion, and Harmony by Roland Tharp, Peggy Estrada, Stephanie Dalton, and Lois Yamauchi.
• Education for a Civil Society: How Guidance Teaches Young Children Democratic Life Skills by Dan Gartrell