COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL
COSTA RICA
A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL

Early Childhood

Teaching & Learning at CDS

Early Childhood: Pre-kindergarten

Welcome to our Pre-kindergarten Teaching & Learning Overview!

We hope the pages that follow will provide you with a window on our CDS learning world that leaves you not just better informed about our curriculum, but inspired by the liveliness and sense of purpose that characterize our day-to-day activities and experiences in the Early Childhood House at CDS.

From year to year as they progress along the CDS learning continuum, we provide our students with opportunities and challenges designed to consolidate and extend their knowledge base, develop and refine their skills, and deepen their understanding of universal concepts. This overview outlines for you the learning expectations we have of our Pre-kindergarten students, and also offers some insight into the ways in which these are brought to life across the school year.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you wish to know more about our teaching and learning program in the Early Childhood House – we would be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

Primary Vision Of Learning

•nurture

Through caring, strengthening, tending, guiding, supporting, scaffolding, encouraging; through paying attention to our students' Social Emotional Development: their identity, personhood, individuality and the qualities of integrity, sincerity, empathy

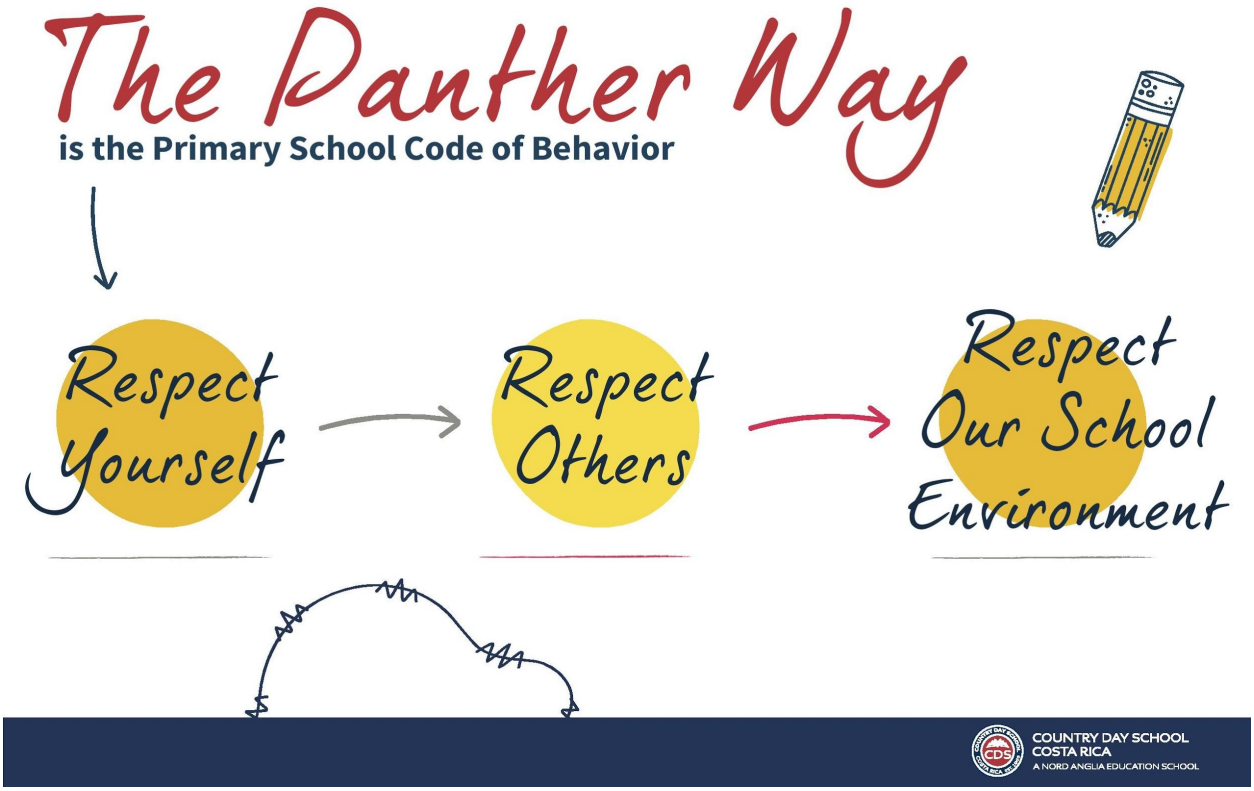
•empower

Through building capacity: extending knowledge, deepening understanding, refining skills, fostering dispositions; through examining and promoting self-knowledge, self-confidence and resilience; through framing decision-making and action-taking as the culmination of analysis, judgment, discernment

•inspire

Through being authentic learner role models, questioning and challenging assumptions and openly exhibiting a passion and enthusiasm for learning; through encouraging curiosity, creativity and innovation; through validating positive action and solution-oriented approaches; through ensuring learning is meaningful, relevant, engaging and challenging

an inclusive community of learners committed to nurturing the development of the whole child through meaningful, playful inquiry



The Early Childhood (EC) House at CDS is a hive of learning activity for children aged 2-6!

Our EC teaching and learning program is multi-dimensional: it incorporates the most effective approaches and practices, supported by recent research-based evidence, and encompasses well-defined expectations and goals for our young learners in all areas of their development. In the EC, our students and teachers create a warm, safe atmosphere that truly exudes the joys of learning!

The Learning Climate

In order for learning to truly germinate and thrive in a school, it requires conditions that, collectively and consistently, accommodate the interests and needs of our young learners. The qualities of encouragement, openness, and inspiration characterize the EC learning climate and are evident in:

- the ways in which we communicate and interact
- the scenarios we create to stimulate and sustain interest, and
- the lines of inquiry we project for our students so that they're able to build incrementally on what they already know and understand.

Play - a Vehicle for Learning

Play is the natural, default *modus operandi* of young learners, and, as educators, we embrace the potential this holds for them to construct and develop meaning. Play opens up myriad learning avenues to our very young students, and allows them to experience:

- enjoyment - happiness isn't just a way to travel; it's a way to learn
- the power and wonder of their own imagination
- engagement - with people, materials, ideas, or their environment
- the structure of processes/step-by-step actions
- creativity and expression
- relationship-building and conflict resolution
- curiosity and the drive to know/understand more agency and choice
- resilience and concentration

Curriculum Design & Learning Expectations

In our Pre-kindergarten years, we have adopted developmental milestones to help structure and promote our students' cognitive, physical, social-emotional, and language development.

- **Cognitive Development**
  Cognitive development is essentially the process of acquiring knowledge and understanding. This process comes about for young learners through their thinking and wondering, their experiences, and their senses. In Pre-kindergarten, we support our students' cognitive development by creating opportunities for them to explore their thoughts, ideas, and imagination in a broad range of contexts. They explore through observing the world around them, creating pictures and models, exploring patterns and numbers, role-playing, asking and answering questions, and frequently participating in hands-on sensory tasks.

- **Physical Development**
  Physical development encompasses all aspects of physical change and growth e.g. the strengthening of muscles, increasing awareness of the senses, and the development of fine and gross motor skills. At CDS we ensure that our very young learners are continually building on their physical capacities. In their homerooms and PE classes, as well as in their play, our students are encouraged to engage in a wide range of activities aimed at developing their physical strength and movement, as well as their dexterity and confidence.

- **Social-Emotional Development**
  Social-emotional development revolves around children's experiences, the expression and management of their emotions, and their ability to establish positive and rewarding relationships with others. As they progress through the EC years, our students learn about their own feelings and emotions, as well as the emotions of others, and work to build effective strategies to communicate these in positive ways. As they mature, children's emotional lives become more complex as new and different situations present themselves. We are committed to ensuring that each of our students is as well-equipped as they can be in meeting the challenges that their new maturity brings.

  Our sense of self, purpose and wellbeing is intricately connected with our learning success. When students are socially and self-aware, and possess effective self-management skills, their attitudes to learning are more likely to be positive and resilient. Likewise, their relationships with teachers and fellow-learners are more likely to be cooperative and empathic, while their understanding of the world and how it works becomes more comprehensive and well-rounded.

- **Language Development**
  Language development centers on young learners' ability to communicate. Effective communication hinges on being able to express and verbalize thoughts and ideas, and make sense of the thoughts and ideas expressed by others. We encourage all of our students to not just hear, but listen; to not just talk, but speak. Our young learners engage in a lot of early reading and writing tasks e.g. listening to and telling stories, drawing, painting, and modeling. They identify and categorize sounds, sing songs, and recite rhymes. Prekinder students are introduced to letters in both cursive and print and begin to creatively explore forms of cursive strokes. All of these pre-reading and -writing tasks lay strong foundations for the reading and writing ahead in Kindergarten and Prep.

Interdisciplinary Learning in the EC

Units of learning that meaningfully incorporate expectations across disciplines, foster in our students a deeper appreciation of how their learning is interconnected. Over the course of the school year, students engage in a wide range of learning experiences centered on common themes.

Here are our interdisciplinary learning matrices, for our Pre-kindergarten learners:

Grade Level	PRE-KINDERGARTEN INTERDISCIPLINARY UNITS			
Pre-K	Unit Title: **Family & Friends**	Unit Title: **Pattern All Around Us**	Unit Title: **Our School Community**	Unit Title: **Lifecycles**
	Enduring Understanding: *The relationships we have with our family and friends are an essential part of our life as social beings.*	**Enduring Understanding:** *Patterns can be observed in both natural and man-made environments. People often design and use patterns for organization and decoration.*	**Enduring Understanding:** *Everyone has a role to play in our school community.*	**Enduring Understanding:** *All living things go through a process of change in the course of their lifetime.*
	Essential Questions: ● *What is a family?* ● *What different kinds of families are there?* ● *What is a friend?* ● *Why do people have friends?*	**Essential Questions:** ● *What is a pattern?* ● *What are patterns used for?* ● *Where can we find patterns?*	**Essential Questions:** ● *What is community?* ● *How and why is our community special?* ● *Who works in our school community? What are their roles?* ● *How can we help our community?*	**Essential Questions:** ● *What is a life cycle?* ● *Do all living things have a life cycle?* ● *How does a living thing change during its life?* ● *What are some of the changes people, plants, and animals go through in their lifetime?*
	Related Concepts: *family; friendship; belonging; identity; interactions; relationships; cooperation*	**Related Concepts:** *patterns; prediction; nature; organization; aesthetics*	**Related Concepts:** *roles; community; connection; responsibility; cooperation*	**Related Concepts:** *cycles; growth; change; wellbeing*

Grade Level	PRE-KINDERGARTEN INTERDISCIPLINARY UNITS			
Pre-K	Unit Title: **Uniquely Me**	Unit Title: **Stories**	Unit Title: **Food from Field to Plate**	Unit Title: **Water, Water Everywhere**
	Enduring Understanding: *Each of us is unique and we can express our uniqueness in many ways.*	**Enduring Understanding:** *People tell stories to inform and entertain. Stories can be told in many different ways.*	**Enduring Understanding:** *Food is a basic necessity. Before reaching our tables, most foods go through production and distribution processes.*	**Enduring Understanding:** *Water is a finite resource with many uses.*
	Essential Questions: ● *In what ways are people similar?* ● *In what ways are people different?* ● *How are we each unique?* ● *How would it be if we were all the same?*	**Essential Questions:** ● *What is a story?* ● *What stories do we know?* ● *What makes a story a favorite story?* ● *What are stories for?* ● *How can stories be told?*	**Essential Questions:** ● *Why do we need food?* ● *Where does food come from?* ● *Who has a role to play in growing and distributing food?* ● *How do we prepare food?* ● *How is food distributed?*	**Essential Questions:** ● *Where does water come from?* ● *What do we use water for?* ● *Where can we find water?*
	Related Concepts: *self; identity; culture; connection*	**Related Concepts:** *communication; audience; response; imagination*	**Related Concepts:** *wellbeing; processes; organization; production*	**Related Concepts:** *cycles; connection; responsibility; conservation; transformation*

Pre-kindergarten: Learning Overview for the First Quarter

Interdisciplinary Unit **FAMILY & FRIENDS**
In Quarter 1, the Pre-kindergarten students: ● investigate the different kinds of relationships we have with our family and friends ● find out more about our family members and different kinds of families ● inquire into the reasons why people like to have friends ● consider the typical characteristics of a good friend ● explore the concept of belonging ● examine the impact that different kinds of interactions can have on our friendships
Sample Learning Tasks & Focus Areas
In Quarter 1, the Pre-kindergarten students: ● discuss how people make and find friends through shared interests and likes/dislikes, playing, etc. ● describe a good friend and draw examples of the kinds of things friends like to do together ● make sets and groups of things that belong together, categorizing according to similarities e.g. color, shape, etc. ● describe their families and family members ● create a range of family portraits ● describe the kind of family gatherings or celebrations they most enjoy ● learn and perform the “Finger Family Song” using puppets and manipulatives ● learn that their names can be represented by a set of letters that belong together ● describe some of their friends and draw pictures of them ● create necklaces/friendship bands for their friends ● take part in different ‘show and tell’ sessions by presenting picture collages and videos of themselves and their families ● create models of their homes and add puppets to represent their family members ● role-play in the dramatic play area to explore some of the life skills that people need to have in a family setting
Motor Skills
In Quarter 1, the Pre-Kindergarten 1 students work to: ● develop a hand preference ● grip drawing and writing tools with the whole hand but may use whole- arm movements to make marks ● use fingers and whole-arm movements to manipulate and explore objects (playdough, shaving, tearing paper) ● use refined wrist and finger movements (lacing beads, pouring, playdough, fingerplays, zipping, snapping) ● cut using loop or child scissors

*These skills may vary slightly by age/ level of Prekindergarten.

Social-Emotional Skills

In Quarter 1, the Pre-Kindergarten 1 students work to:

- practice healthy practices and self-care, such as the Washing Hands Protocol
- seek to do things for themselves
- demonstrate confidence in meeting their own needs
- use a trusted adult as a secure base from which to explore the world
- comfort themselves by seeking out special object or person, such as a stuffed animal or family member
- accept redirection from adults
- manage classroom rules, routines, and transitions with occasional reminders
- engage in parallel play, playing near other children while using similar materials or actions
- use successful strategies for entering groups
- seek a preferred playmate or shows pleasure when seeing a friend
- play with one or two preferred playmates
- react to the emotional expressions of others, including peers

*These skills may vary slightly by age/ level of Prekindergarten.

Pre-kindergarten: Learning Overview for the Second Quarter

Interdisciplinary Unit
PATTERNS AROUND US

In Quarter 2, the Pre-kindergarten students:

- inquire into the concept of patterns
- find out more about what patterns are used for
- observe different kinds of patterns in our environment
- develop their understanding of how patterns work
- recognize patterns, and repeat/reproduce them
- create patterns of their own using different media and materials
- create sound and movement patterns

Sample Learning Tasks & Focus Areas

In Quarter 2, the Pre-kindergarten students:

- share what they notice about the wide range of patterns they are presented with: patterns made with objects, images, colors, sounds, and movements
- use patterns to decorate mandalas and plates
- go on a 'pattern scavenger hunt' around the school and record what they find
- watch nature video clips to see patterns in animals' coats/skins e.g. zebras, tigers, fish, and coral snakes; also, in beehives, fruits, flower petals, and butterflies
- make collages/mosaics featuring patterns
- create tessellations using patterns of different shapes and colors
- make movement/clapping patterns
- investigate and copy sound patterns
- explore different styles of pattern: spirals, stripes, zigzags, loops, concentric circles
- make patterns according to the size of shapes/objects: small-medium-large; small-large-small-large etc.
- explore cyclical routines and discuss the ways in which these are also patterns
- make sandwiches with repeated layers
- make necklaces using different beads/colors
- play a range of games involving making/following patterns
- recite/sing rhymes and songs with repeating lines/choruses
- make kaleidoscopes
- watch moving patterns and discuss the changes they see

Motor Skills

In Quarter 2, the Pre-Kindergarten* students work to:

- develop a hand preference
- grip drawing and writing tools with the whole hand and use whole- arm movements to make marks
- begin to hold drawing and writing tools by using a three-point finger grip, but may hold the instrument too close to one end

- use fingers and whole-arm movements to manipulate and explore objects (such as playdough, shaving, or tearing paper)
- use refined wrist and finger movements (such as lacing beads, pouring, playdough, or fingerplays)
- cut using loop or child scissors
- use gross motor skills to dress and undress for the toilet
- begin to ride tricycle using pedals

*These skills may vary slightly by age/ level of Prekindergarten.

Social-Emotional Skills

In Quarter 2, the Pre-Kindergarten* students work to:

- practice healthy practices and self-care, such as the Washing Hands Protocol
- seek to do things for themselves
- demonstrate confidence in meeting their own needs
- use a trusted adult as a secure base from which to explore the world
- comfort themselves by seeking out special object or person, such as a stuffed animal or family member
- accept redirection from adults
- manage classroom rules, routines, and transitions with occasional reminders
- engage in parallel play, playing near other children while using similar materials or actions
- use successful strategies for entering groups
- seek a preferred playmate or shows pleasure when seeing a friend
- play with one or two preferred playmates
- manage separations without distress and engages with trusted adults
- demonstrate concern about the feelings of others
- seek adult help to resolve social problems

*These skills may vary slightly by age/ level of Prekindergarten.

Pre-kindergarten: Learning Overview for the Third Quarter

Interdisciplinary Unit OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY
In Quarter 3, the Pre-kindergarten students: ● increase their understanding of what it means to belong to a community ● increase their understanding of the need to look after our community environment and care for the people who share it with us ● investigate the roles of some key people who belong to our school community ● develop their understanding of the jobs people do in our school community, sometimes on their own but often working with others ● make friends with our community members and greet them by name ● recognize the need for agreements/rules in a community to make sure that people are safe ● discuss how people make and find friends through shared interests and likes/dislikes, playing, etc. ● describe a good friend and draw examples of the kinds of things friends like to do together
Sample Learning Tasks & Focus Areas
In Quarter 3, the Pre-kindergarten students: ● develop familiarity with different colors and their names ● perform simple sorting tasks ● experiment with different shapes when playing with construction equipment and puzzles ● enjoy looking at picture books ● enjoy being read to ● ask questions to find out more about a topic or a story ● show curiosity when exploring new places and objects ● engage in make-believe/fantasy play ● share simple stories about their experiences ● sing songs and recite poems ● discuss their feelings about different scenarios/situations ● take turns, wait and share when taking part in group games
Motor Skills
In Quarter 3, the Pre-Kindergarten 1 students work to: ● begin to demonstrate a hand preference ● begin to hold drawing and writing tools by using a three-point finger grip but may hold the instrument too close to one end ● use refined wrist and finger movements (lacing beads, pouring, playdough, fingerplays) ● use loop scissors ● use gross motor skills to dress and undress for the toilet *These skills may vary slightly by age/ level of Prekindergarten.

Social-Emotional Skills

In Quarter 3, the Pre-kindergarten students:

- practice healthy practices and self-care, such as the Washing Hands Protocol
- seek to do things for themselves
- demonstrate confidence in meeting their own needs
- use a trusted adult as a secure base from which to explore the world
- comfort themselves by seeking out special object or person, such as a stuffed animal or family member
- accept redirection from adults
- manage classroom rules, routines, and transitions with occasional reminders
- engage in parallel play, playing near other children while using similar materials or actions
- use successful strategies for entering groups
- seek a preferred playmate or shows pleasure when seeing a friend
- play with one or two preferred playmates
- manage separations without distress and engages with trusted adults
- demonstrate concern about the feelings of others
- seek adult help to resolve social problems

*These skills may vary slightly by age/ level of Prekindergarten.

Pre-kindergarten: Learning Overview for the Fourth Quarter

Interdisciplinary Unit **LIFECYCLES**
In Quarter 4, the Pre-kindergarten students: ● inquire into the concept of life cycles ● observe and discuss some of the changes people, plants, and animals go through in their lifetime ● investigate the similarities and differences between the life cycles of different living things ● come to understand that living things need to change in order to grow ● develop an understanding of the ways in which all living things go through different phases as they grow ● explain how living things change over time ● identify and name the phases of different life cycles (people, butterfly, frog, chick)
Sample Learning Tasks & Focus Areas
In Quarter 4, the Pre-kindergarten students: ● read stories/watch videos about different living things and how they grow and change ● make connections, and identify similarities and differences, between the life cycles of different living things ● investigate and share some of the ways in which *they* have changed over time ● take a field trip to the butterfly farm and make observations/ask questions ● sequence the different stages of life living things go through ● act out different life cycles ● draw/paint the different stages of life cycles
Motor Skills
In Quarter 4, the Pre-Kindergarten 1 students work to: ● develop a hand preference ● begin to hold a drawing and writing tools by using a three-point finger grip (but may hold the instrument too close to one end) ● use refined wrist and finger movements (lacing beads, pouring, playdough, fingerplays, zipping, snapping) ● use loop or child scissors to cut lines and shapes ● use gross motor skills to dress and undress for the toilet ● ride a tricycle using pedals *These skills may vary slightly by age/ level of Prekindergarten.
Social-Emotional Skills
In Quarter 4, the Pre-Kindergarten 1 students work to: ● demonstrate confidence in meeting own needs ● comfort themselves by seeking out a special object or person ● look at a situation differently or delay gratification ● accept redirection from adults ● manage classroom rules, routines, and transitions with occasional reminders

- play near other children; uses similar materials or actions
- use successful strategies for entering groups
- seek a preferred playmate; shows pleasure when seeing a friend
- establish a special friendship with one other child, even if only for a short while
- manage separations without distress and engage with trusted adults
- engages with trusted adults as resources and to share mutual interests
- demonstrates concern about the feelings of others
- seek adult help to resolve social problems
- suggest solutions to social problems

*These skills may vary slightly by age/ level of Prekindergarten.

Additional Areas of Learning

The entire learning complement for a full-day student in Pre-kindergarten also includes weekly scheduled classes for Spanish (1), Music (2), Physical Education/ Health & Wellness (2), and Social-Emotional Learning (1). In addition to acquiring and developing skills and dispositions specific to each of these particular areas, the students also have a range of opportunities to explore the focal concepts of their Interdisciplinary Units through different learning lenses.

- **Spanish**
  Spanish, the language of our host country and the mother tongue of over 60% of our student population, is our 'additional language' choice in the Early Childhood House. In Pre-kindergarten our students enjoy a balanced range of learning experiences aimed at developing their interpersonal communication, their presentational speaking and pre-writing, and their interpretive listening.

- **Music**
  Through listening to and producing their own musical sounds, our Pre-kindergarten students are able to better understand the expressive qualities of different musical elements. Our young musicians are given a wide range of opportunities to experiment and work with different instruments and techniques, as well as perform.

- **Physical Education (PE)**
  PE classes in the Early Childhood House are designed to encompass and address all areas of our students' physical development. Across the school year, the activities our Pre-kindergarten students participate in are varied and balanced and provide them with the opportunities they need in order to develop their determination, strength, coordination, and collaborative skills.

- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)**
  Over the course of the school year, our young learners in Kindergarten explore SEL themes in a variety of ways. Facilitated by our Early Childhood Counselor, weekly social-emotional classes support children in developing skills needed to express and regulate their emotions in appropriate ways. Kindergarten children explore their feelings and relationships through

interactive stories, modeling, role play, guided discussions, and hands-on activities.

In addition to weekly classes, our young learners participate in monthly presentations to explore topics such as diversity, kindness, inclusiveness, and global citizenship. These concepts are reinforced through read-aloud, conversations, and activities with their classroom teachers throughout the month.

Each school day, the children take part in meeting/circle times with their homeroom teachers. These moments are precious and provide regular opportunities for the children to share thoughts, feelings and experiences: they talk about their day - the lows, the highs, the reasons why; they showcase special news they may have for their teachers and friends; and they discuss themes and topics from SEL classes or monthly presentations in relation to their own experiences.

Social and emotional learning is further supported by implementation of Conscious Discipline strategies and approaches, as well as our promotion of The Panther Way: respect for self, others, and the environment.