

# kihz Daycare Centres Pedagogical Concept

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of the Foundation is to provide supplementary childcare support to families employed by the universities in the Zurich area on a reliable and sustainable basis.

Our work focuses on developing and guiding the children in our care. We want each child to feel accepted and secure, and to be able to grow in a stimulating environment, attended to by dedicated and sensitive carers.

The following documentation presents the pedagogical approach, content and aims that underpin our work. It evolved from a rigorous examination of practice and theory in early childhood education, childcare and rearing, and follows the Reggio pedagogical principles. We see the present concept as a flexible basis that is subject to development and innovation, for it is of great importance to us, through regular reflection on our work and reassessment of content and aims, to ensure the continued improvement of our high-quality childcare standards.

### Commitment and competence definition

As member of an association of university-supported childcare institutions, we provide a wide range of childcare services and are committed to ensuring the growth of these options on a coordinated basis. With our close relations to the universities, we can take advantage of new research findings in early childhood education.

All kihz staff members are committed to applying the concept to their daily work. The concept is available to all parents<sup>3</sup>, relevant authorities and offices. For the purpose of quality assurance, regular quality checks are made by the management of the kihz daycare centres and the individual daycare centre heads. The concept is updated in accordance with changing needs and requirements in practice and theory.

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<sup>1</sup>For readability, the male form is used but applies equally to both genders.

<sup>2</sup>Taken from the concept and practice established by Loris Malaguzzi, early childhood educator, of the communal daycare centres in the city of Reggio Emilia, Italy.

<sup>3</sup>The term 'parents' is to be understood in the wider sense as all legal guardians with responsibility for the child's upbringing.



## 2. Mission

**Children are the explorers, discoverers and creators of their own development process, learning at their own pace<sup>4</sup> within the common co-construction of other participants (children, carers, environment).**

### **Trust, reliability, availability**

In order for children to enjoy a healthy development and to learn to the best of their capabilities, they require a stimulating environment in which they feel safe and secure, as well as carers who are available and reliable, and who respond with competence to each child's individual needs. Following this principle, we place great value on how we build relationships in our daily daycare practice. Documented observations of the child form the basis for regular discussions with parents, ensuring a successful working partnership focussed on the well-being of the child.

### **The child in the daycare centre community**

In the daycare centres, we help the children to develop and progress, and to act happily and confidently in a small community. We encourage the children to be curious and inquiring in reference to themselves and their surroundings. We challenge them, encourage them to believe in their strengths and allow them to take initiative. We respect the children in their individuality and guide them while they search to understand how the world works. This involves the ability to make pro-active contact with others, to maintain well-developed relationship structures, to exercise mutual respect and practise cooperation, and to gain pleasure from discourse. Together we seek answers, exploring and discovering the ordinary and extraordinary aspects of the everyday.

### **Learning and education processes**

Learning is only a sustainable process if the children see it as significant and relevant, and if it relates to their experiences, desires and everyday problems. For us, pre-school education means stimulating a child's resources until they reveal their full potential, enabling the child to tap into the world around him. This appropriation process corresponds to the child's instinct to be self-motivated, to probe, to observe, to question and to communicate, to acquire knowledge and to form a picture of the world for himself<sup>5</sup>. Playing is learning by discovering from sensory experiences. Children acquire knowledge from their interaction with adults and peers. Since the ability to educate themselves is accomplished by interacting with the outer world, we provide sufficient stimulation but also plenty of repeated exercises.

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<sup>4</sup> According to the Reggio principles' image of a child (cf. Lingenauber, S. (Hrsg.). (2013). *Handlexikon der Reggio-Pädagogik*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Freiburg: Projekt Verlag).

<sup>5</sup> cf. Stamm, M.(2010). *Frühkindliche Bildung, Betreuung und Erziehung*.1<sup>st</sup> edition. Bern: Haupt)

### **Encouraging progress**

A child should develop into an emotionally strong person. Development takes place when a child has successfully overcome challenges or difficulties, thus developing resilience, endurance and a strong will. In our work, we allow the children, as far as possible, to try things out for themselves and encourage them to solve tasks independently, in accordance with their abilities. By making targeted and sensitive observations of each individual child, we discover their strengths and preferences and offer each child specific chances to experience challenges that will help him grow.

### **The balance between pedagogical activities and self-determined play**

Our pedagogical activities are primarily determined by the children's interest in a particular subject, or by cultural and seasonal events. We work with the children on a project basis and provide them with a multi-sensory experience of the subject from various perspectives for an appropriate period of time. In doing so, we incorporate as many different educational areas as possible and consider the motor, cognitive, linguistic and social-emotional levels of the children's development. Most importantly, we aim for a balance between planned activities and self-determined play.

## **3. Child protection**

### **Children's rights**

Children have the right to protection and we are committed to doing everything to ensure that the children in our daycare centres are safe and protected from every danger. Behaviour that violates boundaries is not tolerated. All staff members play an active role in safeguarding the children entrusted to our care. This is achieved in our everyday social interactions in the form of appropriate conduct, being attentive to how we perceive the children and through awareness of the social experience. The kihz Foundation head office requires that all employees sign the Code of Conduct in order to work at the Foundation and that each submits a special excerpt from the Swiss criminal records<sup>1</sup> every 4 years.

### **Procedure in cases of suspicion**

In the event of any suspicion, a report is made by the person's superior. If the superior is involved, the next higher authority is informed. Should the kihz management be under suspicion, the Board of Trustees of the kihz Foundation will take over the case. Every suspicion is punctually documented in writing. This involves a discussion in person with the staff members of the daycare centre in which the suspicion was noted. If the suspicion is confirmed, the guidelines of the Child Protection Commission of the Canton of Zurich<sup>2</sup> apply: the management immediately contacts a professional counselling centre and sets up a counselling session to determine if there are any concrete indications of a threat to the well-being of the child (the victim and suspected person are always treated anonymously). A decision is then made on the necessity of involving the relevant child protection services or the police.

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<sup>1</sup> The special excerpt from the Swiss criminal records only gives information on judgements imposing a ban on the exercise of a profession, on certain activities, on contact, or on visiting certain locations, for the protection of minors or other persons requiring special protection.

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[https://ajb.zh.ch/internet/bildungsdirektion/ajb/de/ueber\\_uns/kommissionen/kommission\\_kindesschutz/\\_jcr\\_content/contentPar/downloadlist\\_0/downloaditems/leitfaden\\_kindesswohl.spooler.download.1556198388722.pdf/Leitfaden-Kindesswohlgefaehrdung\\_KSK\\_201904\\_web.pdf](https://ajb.zh.ch/internet/bildungsdirektion/ajb/de/ueber_uns/kommissionen/kommission_kindesschutz/_jcr_content/contentPar/downloadlist_0/downloaditems/leitfaden_kindesswohl.spooler.download.1556198388722.pdf/Leitfaden-Kindesswohlgefaehrdung_KSK_201904_web.pdf) [12.02.2020]



## 4. Pedagogical approach

Our contribution to the care and nurture of the children is to accompany them through their individual educational and developmental processes within the context of the daycare centre community. With our professional actions and reflections, we strive to develop the children on an emotional, social, cognitive, physical and psychological basis, helping them to become self-reliant and socially integrated personalities.

### Attitude to the child<sup>6</sup>

We treat each child with respect, and acknowledge and take their signals seriously. We provide emotional security and affection, and build trust. Fundamental to the creation of a trusting bond is the carer's professional understanding of closeness and distance, availability and reliability.

The order and regularity of the time devoted to this bond gives the children direction and helps them to feel at ease in the daycare centre.

The children learn to have and express their own will. They learn to accept help, and to respect the rules and limits of the community. Our actions are based upon pedagogical principles, with the children and their needs at the heart of our operations. We pay attention to the children's feelings and concerns and to developing their capabilities. We consider each child's opinions and desires when making decisions and weigh them up against the needs of the other children in the group. We are aware of our function as role models and conduct ourselves accordingly.

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<sup>6</sup> cf. Agreement on the child's rights, see kihz childcare manual (in German), appendix. (<https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/official-compilation/1998/2055.pdf> [24.05.2016].)

## Our understanding of education

We see the child as an active constructor of his own learning process. This means that the child teaches himself (is active) and independently steers the acquisition of his knowledge (a constructor). Children succeed in learning through the self-reliance and sense of personal effectiveness that they experience during their passionate and inquisitive explorations of their environment, while researching, discovering and experimenting, while making mistakes, while observing and marvelling, and while wondering to themselves how relationships to other children and carers work. We understand the term 'education' as a child's authentic process which it is our job to support.

## Participation

In enabling each child to develop their own self-educating capability, our participatory approach plays a significant role. We are curious and questioning as we enter into the children's topics of interest, all the time trusting in their enormous development potential. The children learn to express and negotiate their desires, interests, needs and points of view. We give the children various opportunities to participate in the daily routine, under adult guidance and appropriate to their development level. In the participation processes, the children learn to take on responsibility. They become active designers of their own life, managing their own resources and putting them to practical use.<sup>7</sup>

## Diversity and inclusion

We value the heterogeneity of children, parents and staff and view the otherness of each person as a form of enrichment. As professionals, we address this diversity. We are aware of our cultural and social relationships, critically question our own ideas and values, and are open to new experiences.

In our daycare centres we enable a co-existence of children of different genders and origins, and with different physical, cognitive, linguistic, cultural and social-emotional preconditions. The children learn about commonalities as well as differences and experience them as self-evident. It is our job to be aware of the individual resources and needs of each child and their families. For us, inclusion means focussing on the resources of each child, on the processes between the child and his environment, and on his potential and opportunities to shape and participate.

We respect gender equality in order to avoid gender-based discrimination and inequality. We encourage the children to participate in all areas of learning and experience, and not only in the areas based on traditional role models. Both girls and boys should be able to express and name their feelings. Our activities and projects challenge the children to discover new activities together. We select our pedagogical subjects, picture books and toys with care and consider their gender-specific significance. In our relationship to parents, we pay special attention to include both parents in equal measure and engage with them as parents with equal rights.

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<sup>7</sup> Regner, M., Schubert-Suffrian, F. & Saggau, M. (2014). What does participation in a daycare centre mean? *Praxis kompakt: Partizipation in der Kita*, special issue, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 4-17.

## Observations and documentation

We systematically observe and document the children's development, learning and behaviour. Our observations are resource-targeted, i.e. the focus of our observation lies primarily in recognising the child's strengths and competences. An important aim of our observations is to provide the child with adequate guidance for the next development phase. Despite our awareness of development norms<sup>8</sup> we focus on the great diversity of each child's development processes, i.e. the great inter-individual variability (each child develops in different ways) as well as the intra-individual variability (various areas develop at different speeds, depending on the child)<sup>9</sup>. Regular documentation of the observations we make of each child forms the basis for meetings within the team or with individual parents. Each day, we document what the child *does* (his actions). In the case of infants, the *Säuglingsheft* (baby booklet) serves as the written form of exchange between the daycare centre and parents. It supplements the oral information provided when the parents collect the child.

## 5. Settling-in process

The settling-in period is organised on an individual basis for each child and takes place gradually in collaboration with the parents. The process follows the principles of the Berlin settling-in model<sup>10</sup>. The parents are informed in advance of the procedure. Our qualified staff are well acquainted with the model and have the competence and required sensitivity to build a trusting relationship with both the child and the child's parents.

Two personal carers take part in the settling-in process. This ensures that when one personal carer is absent or on holiday (holiday plans are coordinated with the settling-in period), the child has a safe and trusting base at the daycare centre. The second personal carer is introduced to the child slowly. She maintains a certain distance to the child and at first only makes occasional contact. This ensures that the child is not overwhelmed and can settle in gently.

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<sup>8</sup> Beller, E. K. & Beller, S. (2010). *Kuno Bellers Entwicklungstabelle*, 9. Aufl. Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin.

<sup>9</sup> According to Largo, R. H. (2005). *Kinderjahre. Die Individualität des Kindes als erzieherische Herausforderung*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition. Munich: Piper.

<sup>10</sup> Theoretical principles for settling a child into a daycare centre, divided into 5 phases (Laewen, H. J.; Andres, B. & Hédervári, E. (2003). *Die ersten Tage – ein Modell zur Eingewöhnung in Krippe und Tagespflege*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Weinheim: Beltz).

At the beginning of the settling-in period, we give the parents the opportunity to stay with their child over a longer period in the group. In this way, the parents become familiar with the new space, the staff and the other children. Building a strong bond and a relationship of trust between the child and the personal carer, as well as between the personal carer and the parents, requires time. We give you this time. From the start, we give the parents the assurance they need thanks to caregivers who are available for questions and concerns, who address arising issues and who show interest.

During the settling-in period, we observe the interaction between the child and his parents. This reveals valuable information that helps us learn to interpret the child's signals correctly. In the first three days, no attempt at separation is made. Only when the child and parents have built enough trust to the caregiver do the parents leave the room for a short time. The length of the settling-in period is determined by the child. It is considered concluded when he feels at ease and has been able to build a secure bond to two personal carers. The child feels at ease when his needs are fully recognized and met by his personal carer, when he has succeeded in building a stable bond to several carers and when he makes his own explorations. The group atmosphere has a major influence on the child's and parents' well-being. The groups are geared to the interest and needs of the child which leads to a stable atmosphere that both the child and the parents can sense.

After each session with the parents, we make time for a quick discussion on how to continue the settling-in process on an optimal basis.

A carefully conducted settling-in period is crucial for the child's ultimate well-being in the daycare centre. We pay a great deal of care and attention to ensuring its success.

## 6. Daily routine and transition situations

### **Basic principle**

Transitions mean changes to the child in terms of activity, time slot and/or location; we see these changes as developmental challenges and learning opportunities. Transitions are consciously planned and supervised by the carers. This is why rituals are important components of the daycare centre's daily routine, giving it structure and providing safety and security to the child at transition times. It is always the well-being of the child which counts.

### **Transfers and rituals in the daily programme**

As various transfers occur during the day, we are mindful of the way we introduce new children to the day's routine. We make use of rituals in transfer situations, when greeting others, before meals, before lunchtime naps and at other events. The rituals are based on free will and are designed to give orientation.

### **Group transition**

We plan the transition from the infant group to the toddler group two months in advance and discuss it with the parents. The infants will already know their personal carers and





children in the new group and we supervise their transition to the new situation carefully. If possible, we arrange for at least two children to transfer to the next group together.

### **Transition to kindergarten**

In our eyes, ensuring that a child is ready for kindergarten involves a combined effort from the child, parents, daycare centre and kindergarten. Although the parents are key to managing the transition, we as carers play a significant part too. A transition discussion with parents forms the initial basis for approaching this step together. In the child's group, kindergarten is treated in a positive light and special cross-group projects are organized to prepare the children for kindergarten.

## **7. Indoor and outdoor spaces**

### **Basic principle**

The rooms and their design provide the basis for a comprehensive, target-oriented form of development for the children. According to the Reggio pedagogical principles, the room is the “third teacher”<sup>11</sup> and fulfils the following key functions: it creates an activating atmosphere of well-being, stimulates communication, provides the material resources for play and project work, offers appropriate learning stimulation and offers inspiration for the children's activities. Equipping the room with materials and games is always based on our prior observations. We never claim to have completed our room concept. Just as the children and staff change, the design of the rooms changes according to needs and situation.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Lingenauber, S. (2013). Handlexikon der Reggio-Pädagogik, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. pp. 138-146. Bochum: Projektverlag.

### **Indoor spaces**

The form of the interior spaces follows the afore-mentioned principles, allows for a clear overview and caters for the children's age<sup>12</sup>, needs and interests (exercise, retreat, creativity, play and quietness). We avoid overwhelming the children with too many stimuli and encourage them to give shape to the rooms themselves, thus participating in its development, i.e. the rooms are set up in such a way that the children can rebuild them according to their momentary needs. This inspires motivation and encourages exploration and experimentation. Most of the materials are available to the children at any time and are kept in open boxes, drawers or shelves. The group rooms are generally free of tables and chairs in order to provide enough space to play. In most kihz daycare centres, podiums provide the children with an overview of the whole room and the possibility to see it from another perspective. A child's need for retreat is also incorporated into the spaces. There is a separate napping room which provides peace and quiet for children who have different napping times.

The bathroom facilities are designed to accommodate the children's varying levels of development. The toilets and basins are mounted at children's level enabling the children to access and use them from the start without the help of adults. A dedicated changing



area provides a private space in which babies feel safe and protected. The dining area is – where possible – separate from the playroom, in order that each child can enjoy mealtimes to the full.

In the entrance, parents will find general information on the centre and on new projects.

### **Outdoor spaces**

The outdoor spaces serve as an extension to the indoor world and are designed to develop the children's motor skills, to make outdoor exercise enjoyable, and to enable the children to experience nature with all their senses. The outdoor play areas reflect the children's age, are rich in stimulating activities and provide a safe space in which the children can collect experiences and learn how to handle specific risk situations.

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<sup>12</sup> The kihz Foundation concept for infant childcare (2014) defines how the rooms must be set up for infants and young children and is based on the pedagogical principles established by pediatrician Emmi Pikler (1902 – 1984).

## **8. Physical and mental well-being**

### **Child protection**

Children have the right to safety and security. We are committed to doing everything within our power to ensure that the children in our daycare centres feel safe and are protected. We are bound to providing effective child protection (see kihz Foundation security and hygiene manual (in German), chapter 1, "Prävention/Sekurität", pp 8 – 25)<sup>13</sup>.

### **Nutrition**

#### **Basic principle**

Eating meals is an enjoyable, cultural and communicative experience. In all kihz daycare centres, lunch (except baby purées) is delivered by a catering company<sup>14</sup> which complies with the Zurich government's *Leichter Leben*<sup>15</sup> (Lighter Life) guidelines. We believe in giving the children a varied and balanced diet. The food is fresh and seasonal, and carefully prepared and stored. With our nutrition concept<sup>16</sup> we aim to sensitize the children to healthy eating and drinking habits and to encourage them to be open to a variety of foods by regularly introducing new dishes. Mealtimes are flexible in order to cater for individual needs.

#### **Eating culture**

The children and carers eat together at the table. Snacks can also be eaten sitting on the floor. Babies are fed on the carer's lap and are only placed in a high chair or a child's chair when they can sit up themselves. Carers then provide assistance at mealtimes with the aim of teaching the children to learn to eat by themselves, but without pressure. We help where help is required. The children decide themselves what and how much they want to eat and serve their portion themselves. The carers encourage them to sample unfamiliar foods and make them aware of different types of foods. They talk to the



children about the varying tastes and smells. When a child is full, he does not need to finish his plate. The daycare centres provide tables and chairs at children's height which allow the children to sit down and stand up themselves, and to maintain contact with the floor. We encourage and help the children to eat with cutlery. Our own eating habits serve as an example. Depending on the day's schedule, the *Znüni* (mid-morning snack) can have a looser structure, i.e. the children can decide themselves when they want to join the carers at the table.

The children are involved in preparing the table and clearing up after meals. They can help in transferring the delivered food to serving dishes and laying the table, and they clear away their plates and cutlery themselves. Where possible we prepare simple dishes with them.

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<sup>13</sup> The kihz safety and hygiene manual is a comprehensive document that can be consulted at any time in the daycare centre.

<sup>14</sup> Smeiley's GmbH ([www.smeileys.ch](http://www.smeileys.ch))

<sup>15</sup> [www.leichter-leben-zh.ch](http://www.leichter-leben-zh.ch)

<sup>16</sup> The kihz daycare nutrition concept is supplied to parents with the admission papers.



### **Drinking**

The children can drink unsweetened tea or water at any time of the day. Each child has an own bottle which is always on hand. At the table, the children pour their own drinks. We encourage the children to drink regularly. Sweetened drinks are not permitted.

### **Other dietary requirements**

We keep a written record of cultural and religious dietary requirements, and/or intolerances due to allergies, and ensure that they observed. Our nutritional concept offers enough choice and alternatives. In exceptional cases, the parents can bring their own appropriate food (in consultation with the daycare centre head).

In all forms of food preparation and storage, we apply the concept set out in the kihz Foundation's safety and hygiene manual.

### **Rest and sleep**

#### **Basic principle**

The children's napping times are based upon their needs. Each child has their own routine and this is respected.

#### **Napping**

When children take an after-lunch nap, we endeavour to create the same conditions as at home. We ask parents about the child's individual habits (length of nap, falling asleep aids such as dummy/pacifier or cuddly toy) and adapt them to the daycare centre. We are with the children when they fall asleep and adhere to the kihz Foundation's code of conduct. The carers are always close by and regularly check that the sleeping child is able to sleep in peace. A monitor enables us to hear any verbal signals or movements from the child and to react accordingly. The child's sleeping phases are documented and communicated to the parents on a daily basis.

#### **Equipment**

We provide the children with various options according to age to ensure that they can sleep comfortably. Children's beds, soft foam beds, mattresses, baby hammocks, cribs and buggies are always available. Each child has a sleeping space with their own bed linen. If required, young children are also given a blanket and pillow, and babies a sleeping bag. Personal belongings may be brought from home.

#### **Quiet times**

With all the impressions and activities experienced during a typical day in the centre, the children have the need for a quiet space. Our rooms are designed to give children various options for withdrawing (book corner, quiet corner, etc.).



## Personal hygiene

### Basic principle

Children depend on help from adults in learning the rules of personal hygiene. By watching, copying, and through their own doing, they acquire competences in personal body care. They learn to be aware of and appreciate their body. This raises their self-confidence and helps them to develop a positive self-image. We give all the children the chance to see their daily body care routine as a standard everyday ritual in which also the youngest take an active role, depending on their stage of development.

### Nappy/diaper changing

Very small children need to feel special care and support from caregivers in this particular situation. Changing the child's nappy is a conscious activity and plenty of time is taken for this 1:1 interaction. Toys are not included in this activity. We respond to each child's personal needs and sensitively observe the child's signals. This interaction strengthens the socio-emotional bond. We give the child our full attention and treat them with respect, adjusting to their pace and ensuring an intimate atmosphere. The physical and psychological well-being of the child stands at the heart of our actions and the situation. We explain each step of the procedure in order to remain in dialogue with the child. The child is changed by their own personal carer. After being introduced to the process, staff in training or new staff may also do the nappy change provided the child has built a trusted relationship with the carer.

### Other personal hygiene situations

We help the children to clean their teeth, wash their faces, apply cream or brush their hair. We take them to the toilet, encourage them and praise them on their success. Each child decides for himself if he wants to use the potty or the toilet or continue to wear nappies, and while cleaning himself we provide encouragement and support. We adhere to the kihz Foundation's security and hygiene manual in all our actions.

## Exercise

### Basic principle

Children need space in order to move around freely, make their own experiences and learn the extent of their own limits. Enhancing motor skills is particularly valuable due to a direct connection with the child's cognitive and sensorial development. For this reason, we ensure that the children have ample room to move, with spaces that are designed for mobility and which offer the children plenty of ways to use their motor skills in their interactions with the environment.

### Encouraging exercise

This enables the children to follow their inherent need to move throughout the day while putting their abilities to the test at the same time. By trying out new forms of movement and exercise, the children learn what their body is capable of. We observe and guide the children carefully while they learn from their own experiences in movement and exercise and do not pressurise or intervene. Our staff take into account each child's personal movement abilities and individual pace. In our work with babies and toddlers, we at kihz follow the early childhood education principles set by Emmi Pikler<sup>17</sup>.



In addition, we organise regular exercise activities and projects based on the children's stage of development, such as weekly visits to the sports hall, days in the forest, and adventure playgrounds, both outdoor and indoor.

Our participation in the *Purzelbaum Kita*<sup>18</sup> project enables us to expand our knowledge and expertise in the field of preschool physical exercise.

## 9. Language and communication

### Basic principle

Language is the most important human means of communication used to convey thoughts, information, desires and feelings. Children develop their language and communication skills through interaction with other children and adults. Communication takes place in verbal, non-verbal and para-verbal ways.

### Language in the daycare centres

We speak Swiss German and German with the children, using a child-friendly language, based on the child's own language. We pay attention to the sounds and melody of the language, and to facial expressions and gestures, while taking care to maintain eye contact. We acknowledge the children's utterances, repeat them, put them into a whole sentence, give responses and allow for pauses. We use language to accompany our actions and the children's deeds.

### Communication

The communication culture in our daycare centres is based on the children's stage of development and is respectful. We give the children time to find their words, listen carefully, let them finish, and answer their questions in an age-appropriate way. We adapt our vocabulary and sentence structure according to their different ages. Everyday life offers many opportunities to converse, either in story-telling or singing circles, during mealtimes, while playing, or during musical activities, at wash-times or on a walk. This provides a natural environment in which the children can build their vocabulary and develop their linguistic skills. We are aware that children who grow up in an environment where language is celebrated are better able to apply their mental abilities later in life.

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<sup>17</sup> Pikler, E. (2001). *Lasst mir Zeit. Die selbstständige Bewegungsentwicklung des Kindes bis zum freien Gehen*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Munich: Pflaum / cf. kihz Foundation infant childcare concept, 2014

<sup>18</sup> A project organized by the Health Services of the City of Zurich, ([www.stadt-zuerich.ch/purzelbaumkita](http://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/purzelbaumkita))

## 10. Initial understandings of mathematics and explorations into the natural sciences

### Basic principle

It is through a pro-active approach and concrete experiences that children develop a basic understanding of mathematics. From encounters in the natural world, and experimental dealings with a variety of materials, tools and technical processes, children uncover connecting effects which provide solutions to their questions.

### Mathematics

Basic mathematical skills and abilities are an important precondition in order to describe and understand the world using mathematical terms and insights. Developmental psychology today assumes that children of preschool age already have knowledge of numbers and an understanding of mathematics<sup>19</sup>. In our work, we therefore aim to embed the world of mathematics into the children's world in a true-to-life way. It is particularly important to make children aware of numbers, shapes, quantities, weights, lengths, angles and relationships while they are playing, or during their daily routine – and to give explanations to their questions. We apply this principle in concrete everyday situations while the children explore the world on a self-guided basis, following their natural senses. The main priority is to give free rein to the children's lively curiosity and their natural interest in mathematical content. We take care to offer content in a way that is imaginative and appropriate to the children's stage of development, and in a range of forms (different materials while engaging in free play, singing, music, painting, rhymes, circle games, stories, workshop activities and projects). This methodical approach ensures that each child can enjoy their own form of access and, as agent of their own learning process, discover new forms of access at the same time.

### Natural sciences

Children have a fundamental and often instinctive interest in the phenomena they discover in both animate and inanimate nature; they pursue this natural curiosity spontaneously and excitedly, and love to experiment and observe. To gain basic experience in natural sciences, it is not a matter of providing the children with scientific explanations. We focus rather on making phenomena tangible and enabling if-then causalities using as many of their senses as possible. Children want to understand the phenomena evident in their immediate surroundings<sup>20</sup>. It is important for the children to order, revise and de-code the observations they make of their environment. They want to comprehend what happens when they are pro-active and make experiments in their everyday life or with nature. Experimenting with different phenomena does much to strengthen the children's personal relationship to their environment and it is our job to offer the children enough time and space to pursue this instinctive need to explore. We support them linguistically by commenting and asking questions, and use their visibly growing interest in learning (evident from their questions, interests and topics) as the basis for planning new activities.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Stamm, M. (2010). *Frühkindliche Bildung, Betreuung und Erziehung*, pp. 128 – 132. Bern: Haupt. Cf. Merz, Chr. et al. (2013). *Spot: So geht's – Spass mit Zahlen und Mathematik im Kindergarten. Sonderheft Kindergarten heute*. Freiburg i. B.: Herder.

<sup>20</sup> Küstner, C. (2005). *Praxis kompakt: Naturwissenschaften zum Anfassen. Themenheft Kindergarten heute*. Freiburg i. B.: Herder.

## 11. Creativity

### Basic principle

Children live out their creativity; it is part of all their life's manifestations. While playing, children constantly build a bridge between their imaginary and real consciousness. Ideas, fantasy and imagination give form to their creative activity, enabling them to build new realities.<sup>21</sup>

When planning the day and designing the room, we ensure that the children encounter a prepared environment that provides them with enough different possibilities for self-expression, with free access to paint, design, build, experiment, sing, make music and dance. The offered material is adaptable and aesthetic, meaning it appeals to the senses. The children's free creative work focusses on the process. We avoid the use templates and guidelines.

### Expressing creativity

Through the choice of materials and activities we offer, the children are encouraged to incorporate various materials into what they do, to experiment with sounds from objects and instruments, and to discover new forms of movement. In this process, we respect each child's form of expression and provide them with new inputs when appropriate (or when necessary). The carers assist the children in their use of tools, materials or musical instruments and give basic instructions to younger children. The carers take care not to limit their instructions to standard practices, but focus on allowing for individual experience and furthering the child's fine motor skills.

We offer the children space and time to develop ideas, to generate inner images and memories, and to wonder and to observe, in order that they can present what they have experienced and conceived. In this regard, we ensure that creative processes can be interrupted and resumed at a later time.

Musical activities (rhythm, music, singing and dance) in the form of rituals, circles, singing games and movement games are always included in our work, as a reflection of our holistic approach.

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<sup>21</sup> Herzka, H.S (1989). *Das Kind ein schöpferisches Wesen*. Article in the anniversary publication "Kreativität", pp.36-47, Frauenfeld: Huber & Co.



## 12. Personality and social behaviour

### Basic principle

At kihz, we see each child as a unique individual with their own personal narrative, abilities and resources. We are aware that the daycare centre forms an extrafamilial part of their lifeworld. Through targeted and systematic observations of the child and exchanges with parents, we become familiar with the child's stage of development. As the development of a young child's personality goes hand in hand with their environment, we place great importance on creating an environment that fosters their development by providing appropriate context conditions based on the child's abilities, temperament and behaviour.

### Personality development

Children should regularly experience feelings of personal success and effectiveness. Positive experiences provide them with confirmation and encourage them to act independently. We give the children time, acting as reliable sources of support and providing suggestions appropriate to their stage of development. We are aware that every experience has an effect on a person's personality. We guide the children in all aspects of their development. Led by our pedagogical competence, we help boost resilience factors<sup>22</sup> by giving the children of all ages our full attention, ensuring them of our reliability, showing an active interest in their activities, giving them our time, and encouraging them to express and define their feelings.

### Social behaviour

The process of building relationships is of significant importance for the child. With a strong bond and emotional affection, combined with competent reactions from his educators, children see that their concerns are taken seriously. We support the children in dealing with their feelings, which must be allowed to be expressed.

The older a child is, the more they learn that giving in is just as important as having their demands fulfilled. The child finds his place in the group. As a community, the group is a suitable context in which children can exercise relationships and learn to interact with other children. They develop social competences such as consideration, cohesion, compassion and solidarity, and the ability to address conflict. We observe these development processes closely, giving due consideration to whether or not we intervene. We are aware that social and emotional development evolves in stages and we give each child the opportunity to progress at their own pace. With our observations and ongoing exchanges of information, we can see where the child stands. We compile and implement measures aimed at supporting the child's development. We are aware of our function as role models of social behaviour and regularly reflect on our actions and adherence to values.

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<sup>22</sup> Bensel, J. (2007). Resilienz bei Kindern und Jugendlichen. In: Krenz, A. (Hrsg.). *Psychologie für Erzieherinnen und Erzieher*, pp. 178-208. Berlin: Cornelsen.

With all the different opinions and needs resulting from living together and interacting in the children's group, it is inevitable that the children experience conflict. Fighting battles is an art that needs to be learned. It requires a constructive approach to conflict, discussions and agreements with others, and the ability to defend one's own interests. In conflict situations, children learn to identify their own feelings, interests and limits; they learn to express themselves, to control their behaviour, and to tolerate the situation; and they realise that they can resolve the conflict themselves. First we play the role of observer and only step in when we see that the children need our help. Our role is to see how the children can resolve the situation, not to pass judgement. We encourage the children to put their ideas into practice and propose alternative options if requested. We are aware of our role model function in our own behaviour and communication.

### 13. Free play and group activities

#### Basic principle

It is while playing that children learn to understand the world and experience personal effectiveness. It is our job to provide the conditions that allow the children to act as the engineers of their development and knowledge acquisition. We create the required environment and time, present a wide variety of playing utensils and different materials to stimulate all the senses, and offer various options for moving or withdrawing. At kihzh, process-oriented learning stands at the forefront of our work.

#### Free play

Free play is the main activity in the day-to-day life of the centre, in which the children can pursue their own different interests in a safe environment. They learn by setting themselves tasks, evolving their own plans, seeking contact with other children, and adjusting levels to their own abilities. We enable the children to be effectual, to reflect on themselves and to interact with their environment.

We watch in the background, motivating and giving support whenever necessary or requested by the child. We see the challenges facing the children during free play and consider how we can help them meet those challenges and develop their own independence. We anticipate the next development zone<sup>23</sup> and craft corresponding activities. Free play means that the children can decide themselves what they want to play with and for how long, depending on their interest. In order to cover the diversity of the children's interests, we provide materials from all areas of education.

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<sup>23</sup> "Das Gebiet der noch nicht ausgereiften, jedoch reifenden Prozesse ist die Zone der nächsten Entwicklung des Kindes" Wygotski, L. (1987). *Arbeiten zur psychischen Entwicklung der Persönlichkeit. Ausgewählte Schriften*. (Volume 2, p. 83). Köln: Pahl-Rugenstein).



### **Group activities**

Regular rituals, such as sing-circles and fun exercise activities, are integral components of each group's daily programme. We initiate and conduct other pedagogical exercises and carer-led activities on the basis of our observations or in the context of a project.

### **Cross-group activities**

Whenever possible, we promote cross-group activities in the centre. Children can have contact with other groups through regulated and binding get-togethers in the day's programme or on an informal basis. We encourage regular contact through visits, spending time together in the garden or through joint activities. When children are brought or collected in the mornings and evenings, the groups are often together. This gives siblings the chance to start and close the day with each other. Each child, whatever age, knows the carers and children in the other groups.

### **Projects**

We use projects as a means of designing the day's program around a theme in order to promote learning and education processes. The way in which the project content is presented enables the children to investigate interesting aspects by themselves - using all their senses - and covers the various areas of development. Project themes are reflected in the set-up of the room and displayed to parents with documentation on the walls or in book form. In many instances, the children are involved in producing the documentation. This strengthens their level of identification with their experiences, and helps generate appreciation and memories. It also acts as an important source of information for staff and parents on the children's experiences and development.

### **Walks and excursions**

The children are taken outside every day to explore nature. On walks or in the garden, the children have the opportunity to examine the outdoor world according to their specific interests. They experience nature with all their senses, take a closer look at animals and plants and learn to treat their environment with respect and care. Excursions present the chance to learn about traffic rules and how to behave on public transport. We also enable the children to play their part in society when accompanying their carers to the shops, or visiting the zoo or a museum.

## **14. Childcare models**

### **Basic principle**

In the city of Zurich, a standard group has places for eleven children, provided there is enough room surface area. The age structure of the group is not stipulated. Larger groups are subject to a particular age range.



### **Mixed age groups for children between 4 months and 5 years**

Some of our daycare centres have mixed age groups where children from 4 months to 5 years are all placed together. In this mixed age model, we ensure that no more than three children under the age of 18 months are present in a group per day. For as long as there are children under 18 months in the group, the maximum number of 11 children per day will not be exceeded. The children stay together throughout their entire time with kihz.

### **Infant groups and the transition to the next age group**

Besides the childcare model with mixed age groups, we also run daycare centres in which children start off in an infant and toddler group and then, between the age of 18 months and two years, move up to the next age group. The decision on the most appropriate age to transition, provided a place is available, is discussed with the parents in light of the child's personal development stage. The specific needs of these young children must be addressed with particular care. The kihz concept on infant and toddler childcare ensures that all staff are professionally equipped to deal with children in this age category.

### **Combination model: personal group and cross-group activities**

Our daycare centres which feature a combination model offer two age-based groups: up to 18 months and over 18 months. In the younger category, the children generally spend their time with their own personal group. However, at around 18 months to two years, they are deemed ready to visit the open activity rooms, where groups are mixed. The exact point when a child is ready for his first visits to the open activity rooms as well as the decision on the optimal moment to transfer to the next age group is agreed with the parents. The day's programme is based on a balanced mix between attendance in the child's own group and cross-group activities.

## **15. Collaboration with parents**

### **Basic principle**

We see ourselves as partners to parents in the raising and education of their children. We build a close collaborative relationship from the start, with the aim of working together on a united and child-oriented basis in a spirit of mutual recognition and respect. We embrace the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the parents and in return expect openness from their side in entering into this partnership and in understanding our role as carers acting in a supplementary function to the family. Key to this process is daily communication between carers and parents.

### **Parent contact**

The information evening and the admission meeting serve as the first forms of contact between us and the child's parental home. The parents are our most important contact persons in connection with their child. Together we create a solid basis of trust, built upon openness and transparency on both sides, and a compulsory daily exchange about the day's happenings in the centre, and matters in the family home. Anything new, such as sleeping habits, health issues, etc. are discussed. It is these joint reflections made by the parents and ourselves that ensure that the children receive optimal support for their



development.

### **Parent meetings**

Any concerns on the part of the parents are taken seriously and meetings arranged with the daycare centre head or carers. As a rule, at least one fixed meeting a year takes place with the parents to discuss the child's current stage of progress but others may be held during the year at the parents' or carers' request. Within the context of their training, our trainees also hold meetings with parents of the children in their care.

### **Parent information**

Important information from the daycare centre head or the management office is issued in letters and e-mails to the parents or pinned to notice boards.

Every two months, the daycare centre head sends *Elternpost* to the parents containing information on changes in the children's groups or staff, updates on current projects and topics, and important event dates.

### **Parent events**

It is also important to us to enable parents to get to know each other. Throughout the year, various events are held such as parents' evenings and in-house get-togethers where we provide insights into kihz childcare and present pedagogical topics and activities.

### **Parent associations**

In addition, each kihz daycare centre has its own parent association that represents the interests of the parents vis-à-vis the daycare centre and the kihz Foundation, and also serves as a point of contact for us. The parent association fosters communication among parents, as well as between parents and the daycare centre head.

## **16. Staff**

### **Basic principle**

Our staff form the heart and soul of our high-quality childcare. Working together as colleagues, we create a team spirit based on trust and transparency. We are all aware of the responsibilities we hold, and ensure that our conduct is respectful and takes each individual's strengths into account.

### **Team members**

Our daycare centres are led by qualified heads who devote their day to their leadership duties. They are supported by the management office. Each daycare centre head reports to the General Manager of the kihz daycare centres who is responsible for all HR and operational matters across the daycare centres. Each children's group is led by 3-4 carers, who include qualified carers, early childhood educators (HF-level), trainees, and civil service workers. Our pedagogically qualified staff all hold the federally recognized qualification for professional carers (*Fachfrau/-mann Betreuung*).



### **Professional and personal requirements**

Shaping a daycare centre into an appropriate living environment for children requires staff to examine their own values, personal goals and behaviour patterns; a willingness to pursue further training is therefore a prerequisite. Working with children requires a broad spectrum of specialist knowledge, the ability to reflect, an open mind and flexibility as well as excellent collaboration and communication skills. We are deeply aware of our role model function: not only our conduct but also our personal attitude and value system, our ability to be inspired, and the way in which we interact with other people all have a shaping influence on the children and the team.

We are faithful to the aims and values of the kihz Foundation and apply the pedagogic principles specified in the concept to our daily work. We give professional guidance to the trainees under our tuition and work on a constructive basis with our superiors and the whole team. We believe that a positive attitude to life enhances the atmosphere of the team as a whole.

### **Dealing with difficult situations and differences of opinion**

Whether children, trainees, parents or pedagogically qualified staff, the daycare centre situation brings together people whose roles vary from each other. Social and cultural backgrounds also differ. It therefore cannot be assumed that mutual expectations will form a consensus; this needs to be formed on a case-to-case basis, working as partners in a process of open exchange and interaction. We see ourselves as a learning organization and strongly believe in the process of negotiation when difficult situations or differences of opinions arise. Ultimately, it is always the child's well-being which lies at the heart of any decisions taken.

### **Further training and education**

As the operator of the daycare centres, the kihz Foundation encourages staff to pursue further training and education. It runs its own internal training courses that are obligatory for staff. In the daycare centres where groups include babies, a qualified staff member in a leadership position also has a special qualification in infant childcare.

### **Team development**

We foster our team spirit with regular forms of exchange (interview meetings, visits to other groups and daycare centres) and by showing mutual concern and interest. Importance is placed on using a friendly tone, and being open and honest. A collegial and cooperative atmosphere also provides emotional and professional support in the face of difficult situations. As all team members take part in the opinion-forming and decision-making process, each feels responsible for implementing these decisions. We accept and recognise that we have differing personalities and treat each other with respect. We discuss expectations and problems and seek solutions. Our communication is open, and criticism is constructive and solution-oriented. Each person's talent is put to its full use and a motivated and pro-active work ethic is encouraged and appreciated.

## 17. Quality management

### Basic principle

Based on the positive basic attitude of all staff members towards such a process, we understand the term quality management (QM for short) to mean all measures that contribute to the assurance and further development of quality standards (in orientation, structures and processes) in the kihz daycare centres.

### Quality standards in orientation, structures and processes

We see quality as a multidimensional and interrelated construct. Orientation quality is defined by the fundamental pedagogical approach that we set out in this edition of the pedagogical concept of the kihz daycare centres, especially in the mission statement. A common and reflective view of our childcare work results from how we see the child, from our understanding of how to promote the children's development, and from the professional role of each of our qualified caregivers.

Structural quality is formed by the conditions that frame the pedagogical work with the children. These are defined in the daycare centre manual, the safety and hygiene manual of the kihz daycare centres and as part of internal training sessions. Since social and political developments also define the structures, we make the necessary adaptations and improvements (e.g. qualification levels, childcare ratio, spatial and material elements, group sizes, etc.)

Process quality refers to each child's concrete educational and experiential space, which is directly shaped and influenced by what happens in the daycare centre. This quality dimension refers to the dynamics of the pedagogical activities, the caregivers' conduct to the children, stimuli that are both developmentally appropriate and educational, and interactions that are geared to the children's needs.

### QM process

In order that these three quality dimensions are assured and further developed, a circular process is applied. To implement the quality standards in the daycare centres, we use the quality labels QualiKita and PädQUIS®.

QualiKita is a quality label based on a standard of eight quality development areas crucial for ensuring quality. Each development area results from the formulation of a number of criteria and each can be observed and assessed on the basis of specific features. Quality is checked by an external audit at regular intervals. kihz Schönberg and kihz Bülachhof are certified with the QualiKita label.

PädQUIS® is an evaluation concept based on proven instruments and procedures that enables the quality of pedagogical work to be observed and ascertained. By establishing and presenting the strengths and development potential of the pedagogical work, information on quality is collected and documented over longer periods of time. This instrument gives daycare centre managers and staff suggestions and instructions on how to assure quality standards or make specific improvements to their pedagogical practice. PädQUIS® is applied in kihz Platten, kihz Sumatra, kihz Tierspital, kihz Feyerabend, kihz Höggerberg and kihz Chriesbach.