

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Early Childhood Program at CDS is for children ages one through six. Our program encompasses four levels: The first level is the Early Learning Center for children one year through 3.3 years, followed by pre-school, kindergarten, and the last level is preparatory. Our goal is to provide the best possible program for your child. We are dedicated to providing a stimulating, hands-on learning environment that follows a developmentally appropriate curriculum with well-planned, engaging activities. These activities encourage the children to socialize while developing their inherent natural abilities. The staff focuses on the whole child and his or her overall growth and development. We understand that children learn through active involvement. The early childhood years are when children develop their self esteem, gain acceptance from their peers, and are allowed to learn new skills through discovery, experimentation, and exploration in a caring and loving environment.

## **STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY of COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL**

It is the mission of Country Day School, a private, non-sectarian, English-language school serving students from early childhood through high school, to provide its students with a traditional college preparatory education committed to high academic standards and achievement through a balanced program structured on United States curricula.

## **HISTORY OF COUNTRY DAY**

Country Day School, a proprietorship, was founded in 1963 as a private English-language coeducational non-sectarian school, similar to U.S. college preparatory schools. The school grew from an initial 18 students to its present combined enrollment of over 800 students, representing over forty nationalities from four continents. We are located on a ten-acre campus in the town of Escazú, about seven kilometers west of the center of San Jose.

Country Day School is recognized throughout Costa Rica and Central America for its level of consistent excellence in academics. In the past twenty years, we have had sixteen National Merit Scholarship winners, including nine semi-finalists, six National Hispanic Scholars, and a Presidential Scholar. Median SAT scores among our seniors are 600 Math, 550 Verbal.

Over 90% of Country Day graduates attend U.S. colleges and universities. Many of our graduates have been accepted at such prestigious institutions as Brandeis, Carnegie-Mellon, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Duke, Georgetown, Harvard, Northwestern, Oberlin, Reed, Rice, Smith, Stanford, the University of Virginia, Vassar, Wellesley, Williams and Yale.

## **SCHOOL DIVISIONS**

Country Day School consists of four divisions: Early Childhood : Early Learning Center - Preparatory; Elementary School (ES) grades 1-5, Middle School (MS) grades 6-8; and High School (HS) grades 9-12. Each division has its own principal and administrative staff. The school day begins at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 3:00 or 3:10 p.m., depending on which division your child is in. If you wish to visit, please feel free to call for an appointment. We need to have time to dedicate to each visitor, applicant and family.

## **ADMISSIONS POLICY**

Admission to Country Day School requires review of transcripts or any other information from previous school years, a placement test, and an interview. Vaccine and health records, a photograph, and a copy of the passport must be attached to the completed application form. In order to reserve a space, it is important to apply before May for the following August.

## **ADMISSION CUT OFF DATES**

For entering the Early Learning Center, the child's age must be between one and three years three months in August. For entering prekinder, the child's age must be between three years four months to four years three months by August 1st. For kindergarten, the ages range is from four years four months in August to five years three months. . Admissions and placement for these grades will not only depend on age, but also on the interview, the school's screening test, and the child's command of the English language.

## **PARENT COMMITTEE**

The Parent Committee is an organization which acts as a liaison between the parents and the school administration and, on occasion, within the community. The Parent Committee believes that there is a direct relationship between parent participation and student performance at school. The Parent Committee works to establish effective communication between parents and the school administration. It also works with the school administration to support the academic and extracurricular efforts made on behalf of the students at Country Day School. Other items and activities sponsored by the Parent Committee include the Annual 1K-5K Fun Run, the Staff Appreciation Party, and various special awards for students in the areas of academics, sports, leadership, service and spirit.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

We welcome parent involvement, and many parents volunteer in their children's classrooms in various ways. In addition to your individual choices, we have various activities for parent volunteers such as Book Month, a Thanksgiving Lunch, and International Month. We frequently ask parents to chaperone field trips or other special events.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES**

### **APPOINTMENTS**

Please feel free to make an appointment with your child's teacher at any time by calling the Early Childhood office secretary. We ask that you do not arrive unannounced for a conference, since it benefits the student, parent, and the child to have adequate time to prepare for it.

### **BULLETIN BOARDS**

All notices, posters, and announcements of interest to the school community may be placed on a bulletin board located in the business office or in other areas designated by the Director. It is necessary to get the Director's approval before posting any notice.

### **CLOSED CAMPUS**

Because the school is responsible for the students' safety, all Country Day students school must remain on campus during the school day, including after-school activities. If, however, the student must leave campus for an appointment or other valid reason, the student may do so with written permission from a parent or guardian, and with a pass from the Early Childhood Principal.

### **CHANGE OF TRANSPORTATION**

If parents wish to change their child's usual method of transportation home, they must send a note in writing or an e-mail to Sylvia Espinach (Sylvia\_Espinach@cds.ed.cr) ,the transportation secretary, by 10:00 a.m. She will send a return e-mail confirming the receipt of your request. For all children's safety, changes of transportation may not be made through a phone call.

### **MESSAGES**

Please come to the Early Childhood office to leave messages or items, instead of going to the child's classroom. Even though the parent's message may be brief or the item quite small, such innocent, well-meaning presence causes a disruption of the educational process. The secretary will be happy to deliver such messages or items to any student or teacher as quickly as possible.

## **PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Generally held in October of the first semester and in March at the end of the third quarter, parent/teacher conferences provide a special opportunity to look at the student's work, his report card, and to discuss individual progress. The school sends a letter to each parent with the scheduled time for the conference. Families who have more than one child at Country Day will be scheduled around the same time. If parents cannot attend at the scheduled time, please let us know.

Please make sure all bills have been paid so that the student's report card can be given on this day.

## **ATTENDANCE**

The school has a responsibility to know where every student is every day. We keep careful attendance records. The school appreciates the parents calling to explain an absence. We want to spend as much time with your child as possible, so please schedule doctor and dental appointments after school. It is also very important that each child arrive on time for school. It is the parent's responsibility to help teach his child the importance of arriving on time. Children often find it difficult to enter the classroom late. Our teachers are ready to greet your children at 7:45 a.m.

## **BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS**

Country Day School is a community of children, teachers, and staff who learn, play, and grow together. We support and respect each other in order to function well as a community. All members of the CDS community should always behave in a manner that reflects honesty, trust, and concern for the rights and property of others. We want to foster an openness to ideas, feelings, and diverse cultures. Our community will not tolerate actions which are rude, disrespectful or dishonest. Good habits build strong character. In the Early Childhood Program, our goal is to promote self-discipline, a sense of caring and responsibility for all members of the school community.

The classroom teachers use developmentally appropriate practices when guiding a child's behavior. Helping children gain self-regulation skills is one of the most important parts of the early childhood years and our teachers treat each child with kindness and firmness. We are consistent in our behavioral expectations. On occasion a child will be sent to the Principal or counselor when further guidance is needed.

## **DRESS CODE**

We find that our uniform in many respects encourages a sense of equality and fraternity in a school having such a variety of cultures. All PreKinder, Kinder and Preparatory Country Day students are required to wear red shorts, skort, or sweat pants. The top can be either a white T-shirt with the school logo emblazoned on its front or a white polo

shirt with the school logo embroidered on its front. Red sweaters and sweat shirts are also permitted. T-shirts purchased for the annual 1K-5K Fun Run or Book Fair may be substituted for the school logo T-shirt. Uniforms may be purchased in the Campus Store. Either white or black tennis shoes are required.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

Emergency preparedness is our most important ally, and at school we run regular drills so that students will know exactly what to do in case of an emergency. At home, parents should talk with their children beforehand about what to expect should an emergency occur. Reassure them that they are doing their part by remaining at the school and following the instructions of their teachers, and that you or one of your designated alternates will pick them up as soon as possible.

Information about emergency/evacuation procedures are posted on the website. The information below is given as a quick reference.

Our school has a new public address system. The signal for an emergency drill is a continuous bell or a siren. Students and teachers evacuate the buildings quickly, calmly and quietly proceed to their designated areas. Students should remain with their teachers throughout the emergency drill. At the conclusion of the drill, the sounding of a long bell will signal the orderly return to classes.

Everyone should keep in mind that instructions for grouping or for location may vary, depending on the emergency.

## **EVACUATION PLAN**

In the event of a major fire or earthquake, emergency information in both English and Spanish will be broadcast on Radio Monumental (93.5 on the FM dial or 670 on the AM dial) or TV Channel 7. Do not call the school, as phone lines must be kept open for calls related to the emergency. If phones are not working, the school may not be able to contact the media. In that case, you must make your own decision about whether to come to the school or not. Should evacuation of the school be deemed necessary, parents must pick up their children since bus transportation will not be available. In order to reduce traffic jams, only one-way traffic will be allowed on the road inside the gates. Please follow the instructions of the guards and teachers directing traffic, so that evacuation flows as smoothly as possible.

## **EMERGENCY CONSENT FORMS**

Country Day provides a consent form for parents to designate an alternate person to pick up their children in case of an emergency. Such designated drivers should keep this form in their cars at all times. In an emergency, they will be allowed to pick up your children only if they give the consent form to the teacher in charge.

## **MEDICAL EMERGENCY**

In the event of injury to a student, the school will render first aid as necessary and will notify the parent immediately. CDS is covered by Emergencias Medicas for ambulance service, and they would be immediately notified if the child needed to be transported to the hospital. A student is never sent alone; he or she is always accompanied by the nurse, teacher, or principal.

## **ACCIDENT INSURANCE**

All students enrolled at Country Day are insured against accident and injury 24 hours per day, year round. The policy covers medical expenses incurred from an accident. Claim forms, as well as more information, are available in the Business Office, for reimbursement of expenses incurred for medical treatment.

## **REPORT CARDS**

Our Early Childhood staff strongly believes in close communication between the school and the family. Our teachers will frequently be in contact with you in informal ways as you drop off your child or at pick-up. We also formally communicate through Developmental Reports which are sent home at the end of every semester for the children in the ELC. Report cards are sent home electronically at the end of each quarter for children in Prekinder, Kindergarten, and Preparatory. Your child's teacher will explain the report card to you at back-to-school night. We ask that you share your child's report card with him to celebrate his learning. No report card will be given to your child if he/she has outstanding bills, such as bus, tuition or library fines.

## **GRADING SYSTEM**

Our reporting system is based on current best practices in the United States. Student progress in the various academic areas in PK, Kinder, and Prep. are shown on the report card with the following letter grades:

- E = Exceeds grade level expectations
- M = Meets grade level expectations
- A = Approaches grade level expectations
- NI = Needs improvement
- NA = No assessment was done on this skill at this time of the year.

We plan to have the report card distributed electronically this year.

## **PROMOTION/RETENTION**

Current education research shows that most often retention does not benefit a child. The entire Early Childhood staff will do everything possible to ensure your child's success both academically and socially. However, when the teacher feels that a child is not ready

for the next grade, a team meeting will be held with the child's teacher, the counselor, the Principal, and the child's parents. The child's best interest will always be foremost.

## **FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

### **FOOD SERVICE:**

#### **Early Learning Center:**

Snack and lunch are provided for children in the ELC.

**Pre-kdg. – Preparatory:** Children need to bring a snack each day. We want to help the children develop the habit of healthy eating, so please send a nutritious snack. Gum, candy, and soda are not allowed. For safety reasons, we cannot allow glass bottles or other breakable containers on campus.

The school menu is published monthly. Hot and cold lunches, including a variety of drinks, desserts, and a vegetarian menu are available each day in the school cafeteria. Each child needs to have an account in the Business Office. Students may also bring lunch from home. The cafeteria has several microwaves for heating food. The Principal, teacher, and assistant will help your child with his lunch and will encourage him to eat what is sent. Please let us know your expectations.

### **GUIDANCE COUNSELOR**

The early childhood guidance counselor is available to talk with students about personal and academic issues that may arise during the school year. Other support programs such as orientation of new students, and consultation with faculty and parents are also provided. The counselor's office is located in the Elementary/Early Childhood Office.

### **HEALTH SERVICES**

Country Day offers the full-time services of a registered nurse, whose office is located in the Elementary/Early Childhood Office. The nurse will not administer medicine to any student, unless permission is given by the parents. If a student develops a fever or otherwise becomes ill at school, the parents will be called immediately to come and pick up the student. Please do not send your child to school if he has a fever, is vomiting, has diarrhea, conjunctivitis, head lice, or any contagious virus or disease.

### **LIBRARY/MEDIA CENTER**

The Library offers an excellent selection of over 10,000 titles in its collection, along with magazines, videos, laser discs, maps and posters. All students, parents, faculty and staff are welcome to use its facilities. All Early Childhood classrooms visit the library weekly. Parents may come to check out books for their children every morning between 8:00 - 8:30 and on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons between 3:00 - 3:30. Parent volunteers are welcome. We encourage you to take advantage of this valuable resource.

## **LOST AND FOUND**

It is very important to label your child's clothing, lunch box, etc. Unidentifiable clothing is one problem where children all wear the same uniform! Personal items left on the school campus will be placed in the Lost and Found Center located outside the Elementary/Early Childhood Office. Please feel free to come and search for lost items. Items labeled with the student's name will be returned as soon as they are turned into the lost and found.

## **MONEY AND VALUABLES**

Though Country Day makes a valiant effort to provide on-campus security, it is not responsible for any money, radios, compact disc/cassette players, tape recorders, cameras, hand-held computers, clothing, guitars, or any other personal property brought to school by its students. Any money or valuables which must be brought to school should be entrusted with the secretary for safekeeping until the time needed.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Buses**

Country Day hires local buses to provide transportation for many of its students. Buses drop off and pick up students at the main entrance to the school. Bus routes are available for almost any location in the greater metropolitan area of San Jose. New families should consult with the Transportation Coordinator, Mr. Alvaro Zamora, about routes and schedules.

As a courtesy service, an after-school bus service at 4:30 p.m. operates for students participating in extracurricular activities. These are express routes only, not the regular routes.

### **Carpools**

Carpool drivers are asked to remain in their cars at all times, and to observe the orderly flow of traffic. Please turn off your car while waiting for your child.

### **Parking**

Please park your car in the enclosed visitors' parking lot. The parking spaces inside the main gates are reserved for faculty and staff only. After 3:30 p.m. or during evening school activities, however, you may park inside the main gates should there be space available. CDS will not be responsible for damage or theft.

## **Traffic Flow Plan**

All vehicles must enter by the upper parking lot gate, and exit by the lower gate. The traffic must flow in this direction only.

## **SPECIAL EVENTS**

### **ASSEMBLIES**

Students participate in various assemblies each year. Assemblies provide each child with the unique opportunity for self-expression in front of an audience. Please note the dates on your calendar, so you can share these special occasions. Assemblies are held in the cafetorium, usually at 8:15 a.m.

### **BIRTHDAYS**

Country Day likes to acknowledge children's birthdays by singing "Happy Birthday" in class, but we do not allow time for birthday parties. Parents may bring a cake or cupcakes for the entire class to share at snack or lunch time, with permission in advance from your child's teacher. Please do not send party favors or piñatas to school. If you would like to send invitations to your child's classmates for a birthday party, your child's teacher will distribute them provided that all students in the class are invited. If you are planning to invite just a few, we ask that you mail or telephone your invitations in order to avoid hurt feelings among classmates.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

Teachers schedule field trips for the purpose of educational enrichment or community awareness. Each student who wishes to participate must return a permission slip signed by a parent or guardian prior to leaving the campus. Students wear the school uniform on the field trip, unless the Principal has given approval for clothing which may be more weather appropriate.

### **SCHOOL PHOTOS**

Sometime in October school photos are taken of each student by a professional photographer. Parents will be notified in advance of the school photo schedule, i.e. what grade on which day. If your child's is absent on the scheduled photo-taking day, do not despair. A day for retakes is generally scheduled early in the second semester.

