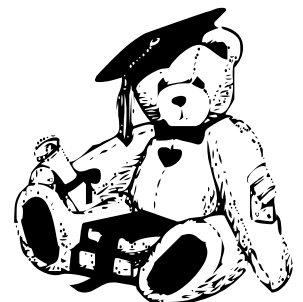


# PARKSIDE SCHOOL

**Pre-school & Kindergarten  
Thalwil**

**Pedagogical concept**



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# 1. Concept

## 1.1. *The child*

At Parkside School we view the child as a competent, cooperative and active learner. Our aim is to support the child in his social, emotional and cognitive learning. Creative play and learning experiences in a caring, stimulating and safe environment supports this.

Through careful monitored observation by the educator, the individual abilities and skills of each child can be revealed and through this meaningful demands and learning situations can be offered. The child's abilities and self-confidence are strengthened by the success in learning.

## 1.2. *About us*

The **Parkside School Pre-school and Kindergarten Thalwil** is a bilingual german/english institution supplementing the family of each child.

We provide a motivating, caring and loving environment for children aged 3 to 6 years. Upon completion of our kindergarten children may be enrolled in grade 1 of the primary school.

We believe in letting our young learners grow at their own pace so that they can develop good self esteem and become self confident individuals.

Open: Mondays to Fridays from 07.15 am to 06.30 pm; closed 4 weeks each year  
Internet: [www.parksideschool.ch](http://www.parksideschool.ch)

## 1.3. *Teamwork*

We emphasize open, honest, constructive and unprejudiced attitudes and expression within the team and that our staff members encourage and respect one another. Collaboration is encouraged by communicating, a readiness to help and support each other, mutual trust, individual responsibility and independent work habits.

Our members of staff have the required professional training and show a high level of commitment. The respective tasks and responsibilities are regulated in the job descriptions. We encourage our members of staff to participate in further education courses and training.

## 1.4. *Parental involvement*

A positive relationship between parents and staff is encouraged to ensure we create the best possible environment and cooperation in the interest of the child. Parents support us in the form of help with activities, by attending parents' evenings, as well as financially. We appreciate open, respectful, trustworthy and problem-solving discussions.

### **1.5. Public relations**

We would like to have constructive and transparent public relations. We maintain good contact with the authorities, neighbours and anyone interested in our school. We advertise to make the public aware of our organization and we participate / organize numerous events to allow people to get to know us.

## **2. Pedagogical Approach**

### **2.1. Induction**

We place great value on welcoming and introducing each child individually. Accompanied by a parent, the child will slowly and consciously be introduced into the school routines. This process may take up to two weeks.

The familiarization plan will be discussed in detail on the first day. Whenever possible the needs of the child and the parents are given priority.

Pre-school children usually require 5- and our kindergarteners fewer days to familiarize themselves with our school.

### **2.2. Communication**

The relationship to adults and peers help the individual child to form his needs, feelings and desires. This trust helps him learn to express himself in the group setting. Rules for communication are gradually implemented in the group.

We therefore place great value on non-judgemental, encouraging, emphatic, open, attentive and related every-day language and expression.

### **2.3. The child group**

The group is split into a Pre-school- and a Kindergarten Group.

During the free work sessions, at lesson times, gymnastics and music lessons, the groups work individually.

The groups are combined in the morning before circle time and in the evening after snack time.

The mixed-age group is like one big family and therefore offers the children a great opportunity to learn with- and from one another. Furthermore, it enables the child to broaden his awareness, individuality and initiative.

A social atmosphere is created in which the older children show enough consideration to the younger ones and they can improve their knowledge and abilities by applying them in situations with the younger children.

These are guided in turn by the older children and they are thus quite naturally motivated in their development.

The tutoring system strengthens the child's self-confidence and the feeling of belonging together and allows each individual to be responsible for others and for the group as a whole. At the same time, the entire group is supported by the feeling of community.

When in their individual groups the needs of the children are carefully monitored through age-appropriate, graded material, thereby optimizing and challenging the individual child.

We accept a maximum of 25 children in the kindergarten.

## **2.4. Conflict resolution**

We value a constructive conflict culture in order to encourage social cooperation in a positive manner. Every child's feelings, interests and abilities are taken seriously. In addition, successful handling of a conflict situation always provides a developmental opportunity to the individual child and in finding his place in the group.

Encouragement and the use of the „logical subsequences“ of a child's behaviour, linked to the current situation, lead to constructive conflict resolution.

## **2.5. Maria Montessori**

The Montessori method was developed by the Italian physician and pedagogue Maria Montessori (1870-1952), who observed children and analysed how they learn.

She saw that every child wants to learn; independent of age, sex, origin, religion or handicaps, and that the learning process takes place using all the senses at once. For this reason, the child is provided by the specially trained teacher with a prepared environment containing pedagogic materials, toys, games and exercises.

Under the direction and with the assistance of the teacher, the child decides for himself what, where, how, with whom and how long he wishes to do something. This gives the child the opportunity to activate his ability to act independently and to concentrate without interruption on the learning materials („polarization of attention“).

The goal is to provide learning methods and processes that support the child in his striving toward independence.

### **a) Daily life exercises**

The daily life exercises are introductory models for dealing with everyday processes and at the same time serve to train the senses and, above all, movements. Some of them can be found in the child's home. They support his sensory-motor development and lead to harmonious eye-hand coordination, while strengthening his dexterity and concentration.

Promoting hand skills also serves his cognitive development. His independence from adults increases, as does his ability to act independently. This in turn fosters security and self esteem. The exercises awaken a sense of responsibility in the child for his environment and create an inner sense of order. They also help develop his personality and impart skills for life in society.

### b) *Training the senses*

Training the senses is concerned with the following senses:

- ⤴ Sight (Visual)
- ⤴ Hearing (Auditive)
- ⤴ Smell (Olfactory)
- ⤴ Taste (Gustatory)
- ⤴ Touch (Tactile)
- ⤴ Balance (Vestibular)
- ⤴ Depth perception (Proprioceptive)

#### The sensory material

Working with the sensory material stimulates the child's mind and his senses. These materials are characterized by isolation of characteristics and senses. For each sense, there is material with varying degrees of difficulty.

Repetition – which children love – helps the child exercise his motor and sensory skills equally.

The motivation for repetition is found in the differing points of interest in individual children. The material is very challenging, thus stimulating the child's attention and independent activity. At the same time, he is learning terminology, vocabulary, sensory-motor and handwriting skills, as well as experiencing geometry, mathematics, biology, geography and language terminology for the first time.

### c) *Mathematics*

The mathematical material corresponds to the sensory-motor needs of the child and is closely allied with the sensory material. The child gets well acquainted with quantity, geometrical solids, volume as well as measures of length and volume and weight, thus acquiring the idea of numbers. He then moves on to counting, writing numbers, drawing and cutting geometric shapes, begins to understand the structure of the decimal system up to the number 9,999 and gets acquainted with basic operations.

The mathematical material also makes the relationship between geometry, arithmetic and algebra clear.

### d) *Language*

A child's vocabulary is influenced by the society in which he lives and by his environment. He speaks in simple sentences. Verse, songs, rhyme, conversation, picture books, stories and work on selected topics support him in his speech development. Forming concepts increases his vocabulary.

A child is interested in individual letters and is aware of them visually, even in words. Initial sounds are recognized visually and acoustically. Individual sounds are put together in words and made visible by written symbols (characters). Words are written phonetically and the child discovers that words have various functions (nouns, articles, adjectives, prepositions, verbs) and that sentences have a certain structure.

The language material is of great importance because it broadens language education step by step.

### e) *Cosmic education*

The cosmic education covers the involvement with the environment (space, earth, geography, the child's surroundings, history, plants and animals etc.). The child learns to understand the concept of the close relationship between nature and living beings and the special responsibility of the human beings regarding these.

The child encounters various cultures (people, language, traditions, celebrations etc.).

## **2.6. Curriculum of the Kanton of Zurich at Kindergarten level**

Our kindergarteners are taught following the curriculum of the Kanton Zurich at kindergarten level.

We work on the following **basic competencies** with the children:

- a) Communication, Language, Media
- b) Nature, Technics, Tools, Mathematics
- c) Identity, Social studies, Values and Standards
- d) Perception, Creation, Art, Cultural Knowledge
- e) Body, Movement, Health (Motor Activity)

A detailed version of the curriculum and a full description of the basic competencies can be found under the following link:

[www.vsa.zh.ch](http://www.vsa.zh.ch) – Downloads – Lehrplan

## **2.7. Bilingualism**

Bilingualism is defined as the ability to express oneself and make oneself understood in two languages in every possible situation. Speech makes it possible to learn, experience and to feel. The child takes in language with its entire being; it absorbs language. In learning a language the aspects of emotion and feeling therefore play a major role.

A three-year old learns a second language just as intuitively and naturally as its mother tongue. Phonetic- and language skills as well as flexibility are promoted through hearing and by use of various languages.

The mother tongue is the language of the heart. We therefore place great value that the staff speak in their mother tongue, be it in Swiss German, German or English.

German is part of the curriculum in the Kindergarten, therefore certain lessons are held in German.

## **2.8. Early music education**

The Kodály Method according to Zoltán Kodály is a holistic learning method to advance early music education in the following areas:

- ♣ Rhythm
- ♣ Performing, listening to and analyzing of great works of world music
- ♣ Making of musical skills including the reading and writing of music, sing and partial singing
- ♣ Improvisation and composition using individual musical vocabulary at each stage of development.

## **2.9. Expressive painting**

Expressive Painting encourages creativity and strengthens the emotional intelligence. It increases the ability to concentrate itself and to take decisions. It enhances the self-confidence of a child. The child learns to express itself and to exercise motoric functions.

Painting is fun, the children play with colours and shapes and enjoy the sensualism. The paintings are not evaluated or marked.

Sometimes children are asked to paint a specific theme, or classic music is played and they paint according to the music.

## **2.10. Movement (Forest and Gymnastics)**

Movement affects all other areas of the child's development. Movement gives the child a picture of his own body and therefore of himself. He learns to judge his abilities and to gain confidence in himself. This is important for the growth of self-confidence and self esteem.

The child connects with the world by means of his activities; he comprehends and masters the world. Movement allows him to form concepts, come to realisations and make connections. Movement is also important for healthy physical development.

Playing outside, in our own playground or in the neighbouring playground, in the woods nearby or the sports hall all offer further room for the children's physical and mental development.

Joy in movement, as well as major and minor motor development is also built. Playing outdoors is also part of safety training, as children who are in good control of their bodies are less likely to have accidents. In addition, fresh air and the change of seasons strengthen the immune system.

## **2.11. Excursions**

Field trips are planned in accordance with themes we work on (for example the zoo, childrens museums, deer park, dinosaur museum).

## **2.12. Nutrition**

Food is essential for healthy and content children. We therefore emphasise healthy eating habits.

Our menus are carefully planned to ensure an optimally balanced diet at all times. Children actively participate in preparing meals (e.g. peeling, cutting, grating etc.). Learning how to use various kitchen utensils, trains their fine-motor skills and builds their independence, as well as contributing something to the whole group.

We like to have a harmonious atmosphere at meal times and pay attention to table manners.

Water, tea and sometimes fruit juice are offered at mealtimes.

Because a healthy, balanced diet has such an enormous importance in the child's development, we discourage overly sweet foods (e.g. chocolate, sweets, chewing gum etc.) We also request that children do not bring sweets to kindergarten.

### **2.13. Housekeeping**

The child is involved in various housekeeping tasks (e.g. setting the table, washing dishes, sweeping the floor, vacuuming etc.). Like this, the children learn to take responsibility for the kindergarten and its resources. We value appropriate cleaning aids and materials. The furniture and the way it is set up in the rooms is also important. The children participate in decorating the rooms.

### **2.14. Quiet Time / Siesta**

Besides learning, playing and other activities, the children also need time to relax.

The younger children can lie down after lunch. Some of them take a nap.

The older children may listen to a story, relax, play quietly, or read.

## **3. Cooperation with the Parents**

Parkside School is a trustworthy family-enhancing institution. Therefore it is important for us to have an open, respectful, trustful relationship with the parents. A mutual understanding is a prerequisite for an adequate cooperation.

Daily feedback support the trust between parents and the kindergarten.

We offer the following elements of cooperation:

- parents' evenings
- visit (visit mornings)
- pre-arranged parent/teacher meetings
- mandatory status meetings (for kindergarten children)
- celebrations and events
- open days

We invite parents to actively participate in parties and events.

We inform parents about news, changes and extraordinary events in writing, or by a sign posted on the notice boards in the entrance room.

Accordingly, parents should inform us about important things, such as changes of telephone numbers (in order to be reachable!), or special family circumstances, that may affect the child during the day (divorce, mourning)

In addition, we invite parents to support us with ideas for further development of our institution. We appreciate the parental support in advertising our services.

It is of major concern to us that the goals and content of our pedagogical work are made transparent to the public. We want the parents to be interested in our work and curious about our institution.

### **3.1. Pharmaceuticals**

We ask that parents inform us in writing should a child need to be medicated. For the well-being of your child, as well as for our safety please fill out the form available in the kindergarten with exact instructions.

*Thalwil, August 2011*