

Our Homeschool Philosophy for 2026-2027

This is a living document, and updates and changes might occur as we learn as a community.

All children deserve to feel safe and have access to an education. Diversity is nature's paint palette, and with it she creates the most varied, resilient, understanding, and beautiful communities.

Tenants We Impart To Our Students and Faculty

1. To be in community is to know oneself, and with this knowledge to be empathetic and kind to oneself and others.
2. One's worth is not measured by what they can achieve, do, or contribute to the community. Worth is given when you are born, because you are a mother's child.
3. Leading by example means being something you might not have seen before, so remember to rest. Creating a new path takes more work than walking a road already paved.
4. Don't give up, you got this, you just need a break. Be gentle to yourself and others.
5. If you make a mistake, don't worry. Learn from it, and try again.
6. If you hurt someone, apologize by telling them what you did wrong, what you learned about them, and how you will act differently in the future.
7. Stay curious, ask questions, and keep learning.
8. Clean up after yourself.
9. Ask for help.
10. Lastly, there is only one you, and you are a gift to this world, as you are. Be yourself, or spend time finding out who that is.

Theory And Practice: **Vygotsky's** social learning theory & scaffolding

Who Was Lev Vygotsky?

The Russian psychologist (1896-1934) **Lev Vygotsky** believed that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition (thinking skills).

Core Ideas of Vygotsky's Theory

1. Learning Is Social First, Individual Later. Learning begins between people in social interactions and then gets internalized by the child. *Example: A child learns how to solve a puzzle with a parent or teacher, then later can do it alone.*

2. Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) "What a child can do with help today, they can do on their own tomorrow." This is where the richest learning happens. The ZPD is the sweet spot between: "What a child can do on their own" and "What they can't do, even with help".

What they can do with guidance or collaboration is the ZPD.

3. Scaffolding is the support given to a student that helps them work in their ZPD. Like a building being built, first the scaffolding helps, then these temporary supports can be removed once the structure is strong. The support is gradually faded out as the learner becomes more confident and independent. We can also think of it as rungs on a ladder. Some rungs are too high to reach, so start on lower rungs first.

Teachers, parents, and peers can all provide scaffolding:

- Modeling a task
- Giving cues or hints
- Asking guiding questions
- Breaking down a complex task
- Giving feedback

4. Language Is a Cognitive Tool

Vygotsky believed language shapes thought - especially internal speech (self-talk). Talking through problems, asking questions, journaling, and explaining reasoning are not just communication tools: they help students think more clearly.

5. Collaborative Learning Builds Thinking

Learning with peers (especially mixed-ability groups) helps children co-construct knowledge. This builds Theory of Mind, perspective-taking, and deeper reasoning. Students might:

- Challenge each other's ideas
- Explain steps
- Negotiate meanings
- Learn new vocabulary
- Practice reasoning together

Mottos To Help With **Social Learning Integration**

Some of these elements are collected from **The Whole-Brain Child**, by Daniel J. Siegel, M.D. and Tina Payne Bryson, Ph.D. as well anecdotally from multiple Speech and Occupational Therapists we have engaged with, as well as our own experiences.

Every child is different, these are our notes for our classroom after discovering what helps support our students. These should not be applied across the board to everyone.

1. **A stressed child cannot learn.** A regulated and supported child can.
2. **A dysregulated teacher/parent cannot regulate a child.** Take care of yourself first, before you take care of others. Find what fills your cup, and fill it so you can pour into your student(s) cup.
3. **In children, all behavior is communication.** There are no bad behaviors, only communication that needs guidance, an outlet, or help.
4. In dealing with inattention, friction, or resistance, if it is safe to wait, **give it 5 minutes**, whatever it is. If it passes, all you had to do was wait 5 minutes.
5. Inattention on an assignment can mean **attention is elsewhere**. Wait five minutes, then get curious, and maybe the next lesson can follow that interest.
6. Inattention can also mean other **needs need to be met**. Get curious, let go of expectation, and see if the ladder on the scaffold was too high. Lower a demand, remove a distraction, or do a body check in.
7. If you find yourself getting frustrated, it is a **self regulation** learning opportunity. See next page.

Self Regulation Learning Opportunity

1. Treat your needs first by verbalizing your own experience.
2. Recognize your feelings are your own, the child is not responsible for them.
3. Teach recognition of your own feelings by example.
4. Verbalize beginning breathing exercises. Optionally, do balance exercises.
5. Verbalize the changes in your body and how they affect your mind.
6. Verbalize how you know when you are ready to continue.

EXAMPLE:

"I need a moment. I feel frustrated because I want to help you learn and I feel like I'm doing something wrong. This is not your fault. I need a break. I will balance on each foot and take some breaths. This is helping my body feel like I'm back in the room. My jaw is relaxed. My shoulders aren't tight anymore. I can breathe easily. I am feeling curious and ready to continue."

CONFIDENCE BUILDING FOR STUDENT THROUGH ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Examples of things teachers can say:

"Thank you for waiting while I worked on my feelings."

"Thank you for understanding that I needed a moment."

"I appreciate how you waited for me."

Supporting the **ADHD Brain** In Learning And Focus

Based on the book: **Delivered from Distraction** by Dr. Edward M. Hallowell and Dr. John J. Ratey and **ADHD 2.0: New Science and Essential Strategies for Thriving with Distraction--From Childhood Through Adulthood**, also by Dr. Edward M. Hallowell and Dr. John J. Ratey.

The theory claims that balance exercises help children with ADHD. Movement and postural control stimulate the cerebellum. This connects to the prefrontal cortex to improve focus, self-control, and brain coordination.

The Core Ideas

- **Cerebellum Connection:** The cerebellum controls movement and balance, but it also links to parts of the brain that manage attention and thinking.
- **Active Presence:** Balancing forces the brain and body to stay fully in the present moment, which may help calm racing thoughts.
- **General Fitness:** Physical activity naturally boosts brain chemicals like dopamine and norepinephrine, which are often low in children with ADHD.

Common Exercises Used

- Standing on one foot or a foam pad
- Walking heel-to-toe in a straight line
- Using a wobble or balance board
- Playing catch while balancing