

Kaleido-scoop

Newsletter of Kaleidoscope School
September, 2017

Hard to believe we are two weeks into the school year already! It seems both like we just walked in the door and that these friends have been together a long time! We love to witness the way each child settles in and how each group takes on its own personality and flavor. It is a treat to see how all the individuals interact and create together.

Thank you to all who recruited and reached out to the community; we are fully enrolled in all classes. Welcome Ethan and his family to the PreK Class and Anna and her family to the Preschool Class.

Some thought and theory behind the Kaleidoscope Way

A basic tenet of our program is the belief that all development takes place in the context of relationship. Humans are social beings. We are wired for social interaction. We discover and define who we are in relationship to those around us.

Erik Erikson is an influence in our work at Kaleidoscope school. In the early 20th century he was an art teacher at a psychoanalytically enlightened school in Vienna started by Anna Freud. He went on to earn a certificate from the Maria Montessori School. He helped both to create as

well as to embody the model of an early childhood practitioner with a deep understanding of child development.

Erikson went on to articulate a theory of human development that associates each stage of life with a specific psychological struggle. Each developmental struggle contributes to a major aspect of personality. At Kaleidoscope School, we find his work relevant and meaningful. It describes humans as deeply impacted by both life experiences as well as the social context of these experiences. His theoretical framework is inherently hopeful as he describes humans as negotiating conflicts in the context of relationship. Struggle is normal, is revisited, and is under revision our whole lives. He describes the “struggle for balance as a strengthening process.”

He defines three major tasks of the early childhood years: developing hope, will, and purpose. He describes the first two years of life as an exploration of the “essential trustfulness of others as well as a fundamental sense of one’s own trustworthiness.” The infant learns to manage many bodily processes with the help and support of caregivers and finds the balance between trust and mistrust. The child’s number one needs are to feel safe, comforted and well cared for.”

Ages two to four years are about developing will. Caregivers

encouraging self-sufficient behavior help the child develop a sense of autonomy. The preschooler thrives with a sense of being able to handle many problems on their own. Responsive caregivers find balance by not demanding too much too soon and by not refusing to let children perform tasks of which they are capable. It is a time when early attempts at self-sufficiency need to not be ridiculed, as that can bring doubt and shame to the child about their ability to handle problems.

Four to five year olds are developing purpose, asking “Is it okay for me to move and act?” The tension for them is between initiative and guilt. The child during this stage faces the complexities of planning and developing a sense of judgment. The child is learning to master the world around them. At this stage, the child wants to begin and to complete their own actions for a purpose. Guilt is a confusing new emotion. They may feel guilty over things that logically should not cause guilt. They may feel guilt when this initiative does not produce desired results.

To see each developmental stage as a struggle between opposing forces in search of a healthy balance point rings true to us. Awareness of this dialectic helps us to individualize our response to a situation. One child may need to develop caution and work on inhibiting impulses. Another child may need to take the risk of expressing an idea or independently trying a tricky project. All children need to feel safe and well cared for.

Basically, it is not just what happens, but also the when and the human context of what happens that matter. And while each struggle has a developmentally sensitive time during which they occur, they can be revisited later in life as future relationships and experiences can heal or ameliorate previous experience or struggles. We keep a close eye on many relationship dynamics in our classroom community. We work to create experiences and foster outcomes that build a healthy sense of self. Erikson’s developmental theory helps to underline the importance of relationship and the dialectic tension of human development.

A Note About Circle Time

The Preschool and PreK Classes both start with Circle Time. We love having parents join us and the feel of the larger family community that Kaleidoscope School is part of. However, having so many bodies present in the space and many staggered transitions at the start of the day is tricky. It is hard to practice the level of engagement and mindfulness we’d like to cultivate at the start of the day.

We ask that you be mindful about your presence and how it impacts both the group and your child. If it is important to you and your child for you to be there, you are welcome. Also consider joining us for the last 10 minutes or so of the day as we read books together. That is a time that focus is less crucial and caregivers can still get to know the members of the class and be part of the action.