



## SAGA EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

The SAGA School provides a **full immersion German language program** that fosters early language acquisition and promotes cross-cultural understanding in our students. The SAGA School's full immersion concept is based on the belief that languages are best learned as "living languages," in which students play, explore, create, sing, and learn. We firmly believe that children who are exposed to multiple languages are better equipped world citizens and learners. We strive to maximize German language acquisition using a combination of the following basic tools:

- An exclusively German environment which draws on verbal, visual, physical, tactile and auditory tools to make language accessible to children with a range of German-speaking abilities.
- A pre-planned body of curriculum materials that introduce basic vocabulary and concepts in a coordinated fashion.
- Ample opportunities for children to develop their ability to express their own ideas, thoughts, emotion and concerns in German.

The SAGA School fosters **cross-cultural understanding** by introducing elements of German culture. We design activities that highlight traditions specific to German-speaking cultures in a manner that invites and honors the individual background of all students. A discussion such as "How does your family celebrate winter?" facilitates an awareness of the differences and commonalities between people and cultures in our global community. We model a peaceful, embracing attitude about the world, while cultivating a desire within our students to go out into the world to explore, find, experience and learn.

Our program is **aligned with Washington State and Seattle Public School District expectations** for early childhood development in all areas. Expectations for child development at The SAGA School's preschool, including social, physical, and academic skills, are aligned with the Early Learning and Development Benchmarks for Birth to Kindergarten Entry, as published by the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Kindergarten expectations are aligned with those of the Seattle Public Schools for entry into 1st grade. This pattern continues until 5th Grade where we prepare students to enter

into middle school. All staff members are required to participate in ongoing professional development in the area of early childhood education.

At the SAGA School, **social and emotional development** is guided by mutual respect, patience, acceptance of differences, and teaching age-appropriate skills for social interactions. We nurture children's abilities to express personally meaningful feelings and experiences with their peers. Children are encouraged to make connections between their immediate environment (school, home and neighborhood) and the larger global community.

We foster an open-minded and welcoming community in which differences in culture, language and abilities are seen as enrichments, not as challenges. We work with students to develop awareness of the differences and similarities between people, resistance to stereotyping, and the ability to embrace the differences and challenges of others.

The SAGA School community respects each child for who s/he is as a unique person: valuing his/her **physical, emotional, social and cultural individuality**. We seek to establish a trusting relationship between teachers, parents and children so that students can grow and learn in a manner that fits their own needs. The SAGA School classroom, enriched by the unique personalities and perspectives of each student, provides an environment in which students can feel confident in exploring their own interests, thoughts and feelings.

Students are encouraged to interact and build friendships across a diversity of ages, aptitudes, genders, ethnicities, interests and personalities. Teachers model and coach children in the development of skills that support positive social interactions:

- Expressing ideas and feelings with appropriate words and tone of voice
- Articulating one's own ideas
- Hearing the ideas of others
- Showing compassion and patience towards others

The SAGA School encourages the development of **age-appropriate life skills**. This includes everything from the ability to dress, feed and toilet oneself to the abilities necessary to live and learn well in a classroom community. SAGA School staff work with individual students and families to identify and develop skills particular to their needs, challenges and (dis)abilities.

Teachers employ a blended curriculum to maximize learning in a mixed-age environment where students learn from their peers. Instruction methods, including those for pre-academic and academic skills, emphasize natural learning processes, play, and fun. The SAGA School recognizes that students learn from their peers, and that they can be positive role models for students both older and younger than themselves. Examples of this are when one student translates for another student, when a student helps another to zip up a jacket, or when students work cooperatively in a group to complete a task.

Teachers at The SAGA School balance child-directed ("emergent") themes with pre-planned curriculum. Our classroom routine balances structured activities and opportunities for "choice time." We engage our children's curiosity and excitement in learning by offering a variety of tools, toys and materials that change

weekly. The SAGA School applies a wide array of instructional methods to address multiple learning styles and make new experiences available to all students. These techniques include:

- Multi-sensory learning: Verbal, tactile, visual, auditory, total physical response, etc.
- Creativity: Using stories and play as a frame for learning
- Experimentation: Hypothesizing, testing and conclusion
- Open-ended learning: The freedom to explore multiple answers and make mistakes

We believe that it is important to enrich our classroom through exposure to the **arts, creative play, and freedom of imagination**. At the SAGA School we are interested in the development of the child's "voice"; his/her ability to express him/herself through words, music, art, drama, movement, and experimentation. Our curriculum is enriched with age appropriate opportunities for exploration in multiple facets of self-expression. We honor and foster children's creativity, love of learning and imagination by providing open-ended materials and opportunities for play, and by teaching skills to help them develop and realize their ideas.

To be responsible members of our global community, children must also develop a **respect for the natural world**. To encourage respect for the natural world and deepen our students' understanding of our ecosystem, we integrate experiences gleaned from time in the natural world into classroom-based curriculum and discussion. Students are given guidance in respecting their environment and all things in it – indoor and outdoor spaces, tools and belongings. This means an awareness of general tidiness (putting things away where they belong) and a conservation of materials (use one paper towel, not four).

Because the health of our students and teachers is of paramount importance, we prioritize the creation and maintenance of a **healthy classroom environment**. To ensure the health of the classroom environment, we select healthy building materials, cleaning products, and toys. We also ask that students and teachers remove their shoes in the classroom and wear house shoes in order to reduce pollutants coming into the classroom.

The SAGA School's German immersion program provides a unique, beautiful, clean and inviting environment for children to explore and feel comfortable in their physical, academic, linguistic and personal development.