



# AISL

American International  
School of Lagos

## EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM GUIDE

2023-24

# GUIDING STATEMENTS



## MISSION

AISL provides exceptional learning experiences within a global community where all voices count. We spark the inspiration in students to be the best version of themselves so that they can joyously soar on their own paths of learning, growing, leading, and contributing as world citizens.

## VISION

Empowering our community of learners to create a just and sustainable world.

## CORE VALUES

### Respect

We are considerate of ourselves and others in order to foster an inclusive and equitable environment.

### Empathy

We honor our diversity, treat one another with kindness, and demonstrate compassion through service.

### Responsibility

We are accountable for ourselves, others, and our community.

### Integrity

We act morally, tell the truth, and feel good about what we do.

### Courage

We take on life's challenges with resilience and are confident in mind and spirit.



# Table of contents

## Eaglets Learn: We Soar!

### Multi-age Early Childhood Program Overview

Philosophy

Learning Principles

Eagles Learn Program Overview

### Eagles Learn: Essential Features

Play-based Learning

Physical Play

Language Play

Construction Play

### Eaglets Learn: Essential Features in Action

Discover, Explore & Inspire

Think Tank

Learning Centers

Once Upon a Time

Outdoor Play

### Specialist Classes

Performing Arts

Physical Education

Library

Mindfulness / AISL Core Values / Child Protection

### Frequently Asked Questions

What is the structure of the AISL Early Childhood program?

How is the learning different and what remains the same in a multi-age program? Does the class size change?

How does the program incorporate groupings to enhance learning for my child?

Nests

Flexible groupings

How will my child benefit from the multi-aged program?

Will the older children be adequately challenged in a multi-age classroom?

How will the teachers measure my child's progress?

What are the accommodations for snack/lunch time?

Is there an opportunity for my child to take a nap during the afternoon session?

# Eaglets Learn: We Soar!

With students at the center, our program of learning purposefully sets out to empower our learners to be self-driven to actively engage in knowing what they will learn, where they are on their learning journey and what they need to do to successfully achieve.

The organization of learning in the Early Childhood is intentionally designed to provide our Eagles with an articulated, high-quality learning program that connects, enriches, and prepares them along the course of the journey for the continued growth and development designed by the subject-area standards. Designed by highly-qualified and experienced educators to clearly defined learning standards, the AISL learning principles act as the key design premise to underpin impactful teaching and learning. The most up-to-date, research-based instructional, learning and assessment strategies are employed to maximize learning for all of our Eaglets.

This Early Childhood guide serves as an essential tool to provide our AISL Eaglets and their families with clear and concise information about the organizational structure of the Early Childhood, with the key elements of the learning program fostering intellectual, emotional, and social growth in each of our students.

## Multi-age Early Childhood Program Overview

### *Philosophy*

The American International School of Lagos Early Childhood Program is founded on a play-based approach to learning that is meaningful, creative and imaginative. A developmentally appropriate learning experience includes a balance of both student-centered and teacher supported learning. We endeavor to foster our students' innate curiosity and we cultivate a learning environment in which students are encouraged to question and explore the world around them. Rooted in an inquiry driven approach, we provide our students opportunities to actively engage in student-centered exploration while providing real life contexts and conceptual rigor. Through this approach, we encourage continued conversations that value students' ideas and promote student voice. We believe that developing collaborative, trusting, and respectful relationships among students, teachers, and parents is paramount to student growth, fulfillment and success. We recognize that each child is unique and comes to us with diverse backgrounds and experiences. We draw upon this diversity to address our students' individual learning needs. At AISL, we understand that best practices in early childhood education regularly evolve. As such, our faculty is committed to pursuing continuous professional learning opportunities to address the ever changing needs of the students.

## *Learning Principles*

At AISL, we design learning experiences for our students, even our youngest learners, that are based on learning principles that have emerged from the studies of learning conducted from the fields of neuroscience and cognitive psychology. The following learning principles underpin the various experiences and essential features of our early childhood program.



## *Eaglets Learn Program Overview*

Our Eagles Learn Early Childhood program is founded on up-to-date brain research and early learning theory on the stages of physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development of children aged 36-60 months. It is designed to meet our children's developmental needs by focusing on reinforcing children's individual strengths and providing support in the areas that represent their next steps in learning within an inquiry-based learning model that values student agency, hands-on learning and play.

Play is valued and used as a highly-adaptive learning strategy that provides choice,

promotes agency and engages children in rigorous opportunities to inquire into important concepts and personal interests. Through play, children make connections and actively construct meaning about their world around them through diverse interactions in their environment. Their discoveries are revisited and revised as they engage in new experiences.

All the learning experiences are designed and structured by the teacher within one-on-one, small and/or whole group settings. Teachers interact with students while observing, monitoring and documenting their learning within structured experiences as well as student-initiated play and exploration. Art is the main means of expression in our early childhood classroom. Children tell stories, answer questions, and propose ideas through drawing, painting, and other creative means. They participate in music during the day as greetings, transitions, in self-expression, and for entertainment.

Literacy, numeracy, science, and social studies, are taught in an integrated model rather than as isolated 'subjects'. Language is experienced and acquired through poetry, rhymes, drama, chants, and charts throughout the classroom. Math concepts are developed through sorting, counting, measuring and other hands-on daily classroom activities. Physical education classes reinforce development of gross motor skills and teamwork.

Our approach recognizes that each child develops at his or her own pace. As a new skill is mastered, a child will be ready for the next challenge. Assessments are completed constantly through on-going observations and interaction with the children.

## **Eagles Learn: Essential Features**

### *What are the essential features of our Early Childhood program?*

For our youngest learners, our Eaglets Learn program begins with ensuring that they are highly-engaged in opportunities that invite them to grow within a setting specifically designed for their developmental age. In line with our philosophy, essential features of early childhood learning underpin our overall program and are as follows.

- 1. Play-based learning** - Through an intentionally-designed play-based learning framework, our Eaglets flourish as learners of new knowledge and skill and develop the foundational social and academic skills needed to support continued learning while doing what they do best, play!
- 2. Self-directed inquiry and learning** - Children are provided with the tools they need to make observations, experiment with what they have observed, and ask questions to clarify understanding. When children discover early on that they are able to direct and guide their own learning, they are more likely to take responsibility for their continued education year after year as an independent and successful learner.

3. **Dynamic groupings for learning** - Learning takes place across a variety of scenarios that allow students opportunities to engage and learn through exploration in whole groups, small groups, in pairs or individually.
4. **Outdoor play** - Children's imagination is heightened when they play outside without the need for various toys, manipulatives or electronics. This setting allows them to play make-believe, be innovative, build creativity and develop social skills.
5. **Apply and transfer learning through authentic engagement** - The design of the various program components ensures that our children are genuinely involved and interested in the day-to-day, authentic learning experiences where they collaborate with others, apply a new skill to a project, make decisions based on interest, and share in dialogue where their voice is honored and encouraged.
6. **On-going observation** - Teachers and instructional assistants continually observe the children as they engage in diverse learning experiences, documenting the children's daily experiences and monitoring the way the children respond to their learning environment and the presentation of their thinking.

### *Play-based Learning*

The core program maintains appropriate balance between loosely structured play, child-initiated play, and a playful environment focused on learning through highly-structured experiences. Early childhood teachers at AISL are continually asking and designing experiences around the intentionality of the following two questions:

1. How much structure do we need to add (as a teacher) to help students build their play skills?
2. How do we use play to build language development?

This careful consideration between student-initiated play and teacher-initiated experiences integrates play into the following learning opportunities:

### *Physical Play*

Physical play focuses on gross and fine motor play such as working in a sand and water tray, riding bicycles, using the playground equipment, and building with various outside materials.

### *Language Play*

Through the use of phrases, puns, rhymes, alliterations and alternative grammar structures, language play can be used as a tool in scenarios involving dramatic, fantasy and role play or as a way of entertainment and fun. (Translanguaging through play)

## *Construction Play*

Design, experimentation, creative thinking and storytelling is accomplished through play that involves a variety of differing kinds, sizes and weights of blocks.

## *Dramatic Play*

Dramatic play engages young learners in social experiences where they can use imagination and/or role play through dress up (clothing, costumes, accessories), stage areas, games, and role play that support language development.

## **Eaglets Learn: Essential Features in Action**

### *What is a Day in the Life of an Early Childhood Learner?*

At AISL, we design learning experiences for our early childhood students that are organized by purpose, focus, groupings and time of the day. A sample schedule is included below. The timings are subject to change but will give an understanding of how this looks in general.

| EC            | Mon                                    | Tue                                    | Wed                                    | Thu                                    | Fri                                       |
|---------------|--|--|--|--|---|
| 7:30-08:00    | Discover, Explore and Inspire / recess | Discover, Explore and Inspire / recess | Discover, Explore and Inspire / recess | Discover, Explore and Inspire / recess | Discover, Explore and Inspire / recess    |
| 08:00-08:15   | Morning snack                          | Morning snack                          | Morning snack                          | Morning snack                          | Morning snack                             |
| 08:15-08:30   |  |  |  |  |   |
| 08:30-08:45   | Performing Arts                        | Physical Education                     | Performing Arts                        | Physical Education                     | Once Upon a Time!                         |
| 08:45-09:00   |  |  |  |  |   |
| 09:00-09:15   |  |  |  |  | Think Tank                                |
| 09:15-09:30   |  |  |  |  |   |
| 09:30 - 09:45 |  |  |  |  |   |
| 09:45-10:00   | Learning Centers                       | Learning Centers                       | Learning Centers                       | Learning Centers                       | Learning Centers                          |
| 10:00 - 10:15 |  |  |  |  |   |
| 10:15 -10:30  |  |  |  |  |   |
| 10:30-10:45   |  |  |  |  |   |
| 10:45 -11:00  |  |  |  |  |   |
| 11:00-11:15   |  |  |  |  |   |
| 11:15-11:30   | lunch/recess                           | lunch/recess                           | lunch/recess                           | Lunch/recess                           | Free choice learning / open snack station |
| 11:30-11:45   |  |  |  |  |   |
| 11:45-12:00   |  |  |  |  | lunch/recess                              |

|                      |                                   |                                   |                                   |                                   |                     |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>12:00-12:15</b>   |                                   |                                   |                                   |                                   | <b>lunch/recess</b> |
| <b>12:15-12:30</b>   | Rest time                         | Rest time                         | Rest time                         | Rest time                         | <b>lunch/recess</b> |
| <b>12:30 - 12:45</b> |                                   |                                   |                                   |                                   |                     |
| <b>12:45 - 13:00</b> | Discover,<br>Explore &<br>Inspire | Discover,<br>Explore &<br>Inspire | Discover,<br>Explore &<br>Inspire | Discover,<br>Explore &<br>Inspire |                     |
| <b>13:00 - 13:15</b> |                                   |                                   |                                   |                                   |                     |
| <b>13:15 - 13:30</b> |                                   |                                   |                                   |                                   |                     |
| <b>13:30 - 13:45</b> |                                   |                                   |                                   |                                   |                     |
| <b>13:45 - 14:00</b> | <b>World Languages</b>            | <b>World Languages</b>            | <b>Physical Education</b>         | <b>World Languages</b>            |                     |
| <b>14:00 - 14:15</b> |                                   |                                   |                                   |                                   |                     |
| <b>14:15 - 14:25</b> | Once Upon a Time!                 | Once Upon a Time!                 | Once Upon a Time!                 | Once Upon a Time!                 |                     |

All of our children arrive in the morning and engage in the following program components:

- Discover, Explore & Inspire
- Think Tank
- Learning Centers
- Once Upon a Time
- Outdoor Play
- Specialist Classes: Music & Movement, Physical Education, Library and Mindfulness

### *Discover, Explore & Inspire*

**Purpose:** To enhance purposeful play; to increase independence, collaboration, individual interest, and self-directedness; ignite curiosity and inquiry; spread awe and wonder; and to invite student ownership of learning

**Groupings:** Child-initiated. Learners group on their own according to interest and exploration; some may engage on their own, observe other students or gather in pairs or small groups across a variety of settings (in and across classrooms, in centers set up outside) All are together, mixing based on interest. \*Teachers may intervene to engage students in developing new interests as appropriate.

### *Think Tank*

**Purpose:** To introduce, develop, reinforce, the concepts, values, and personal, social and thinking skills that promote problem solving, collaboration and self-driven learning; underpinned by the Early Childhood standards and the AISL Core Values and Global Competencies embedded in specific units of study.

**Groupings:** Teacher-initiated. Learners are grouped in their Nests and work within a whole group or small-group scenario as designed by the Early Childhood teachers, depending on the purpose of the engagement.

### *Learning Centers*

**Purpose:** To introduce, develop, reinforce, and apply concepts, knowledge and skills as derived from the Early Childhood standards and the AISL Core Values, and Global Competencies. In these centers, conceptual rigor drives critical and creative thinking, collaboration and the development of early literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and motor skills as well as approaches to learning.

**Groupings:** Teacher-initiated. Children move through skill-specific, Early Childhood teacher-directed centers made up of small groups of 3-6 students. These centers target specific learning needs related to literacy, numeracy and fine motor development, derived from on-going observation and teacher to student engagement. Small groups can work in centers within their Nests (for literacy and numeracy) or across the two Nests (project-based learning with art, fine motor experiences, etc.) as designed by the teachers.

### *Once Upon a Time*

**Purpose:**

To engage students in language development, critical and creative thinking, problem-solving and connection-making. Through stories and texts, children learn new concepts, make predictions and connections, reflect on characters and events and creatively and critically problem-solve as a whole group.

**Groupings:** Teacher-initiated. Learners are grouped in their Nests and engage as a whole group in literacy-based discussions and engagements designed by the Early Childhood teachers.

### *Outdoor Play*

**Purpose:** To discover, explore, and apply concepts, knowledge and skills in an unstructured, play-based context. Critical and creative thinking, collaboration, social interaction, innovation, imagination and gross motor development are key facets of this learning engagement.

**Groupings:** Child-initiated. Learners group on their own according to interest and exploration; some may engage on their own, observe other students or gather in pairs or small groups across a variety of play options available in the outdoor space. All are together, mixing based on interest.

## **Specialist Classes**

Although much of the time the children engage with the homeroom teacher, there are additional learning opportunities with additional teachers the children experience that support the children's social, emotional, physical and academic growth.

### *Performing Arts*

Performing Arts in the early years ignites all areas of child development and develops skills for school readiness in the early years which includes; intellectual, social- emotional, motor, language and overall literacy. In this program, our youngest students learn the concepts and elements of music, dance and drama. Keeping steady beats, creating and following rhythmic patterns, identifying musical dynamics such as high and low, and acting in role plays and story drama are concepts and skills that are part of creating and performing in early childhood. Exploring the world of performing arts allows our Eaglets to discover a whole new world of art and its beauty around them as well as their innate ability to use their body, voice, locomotive and affective skills to find and develop their uniqueness and talents within the world around them.

### *Physical Education*

The physical education program is designed to provide the students with appropriate physical activities that enhance skills across a variety of areas. The focus is on a variety of fundamental locomotor and non-locomotor movement skills, concepts of space, direction and pathways. Our youngest students manipulate objects of various shapes and sizes with purposeful movement to develop hand-eye and foot-eye coordination e.g. throwing and catching, bouncing, dribbling, kicking, striking, and rolling. There is an increased emphasis on safety, and sportsmanship. In addition, they engage in rhythmic and aquatic activities, work cooperatively with their classmates and observe physiological changes that occur in the body as a result of physical activity.

### *Library*

Children will engage in experiences with quality literature through picture books; they actively participate by listening, viewing and responding to rich discussions generated by the stories read. In terms of library skills, they begin to learn about procedures and organization of the library. There are opportunities for them to experience digital platforms such as Tumblebooks and Destiny Discover.

### *Mindfulness / AISL Core Values / Child Protection*

The mindfulness-based kindness program draws from an evidence-based curriculum that engages students through self-reflection, story telling, music and mindful movement to gain attention to their breath, body, and caring practices towards their friends and community.

In addition, students also participate in monthly lessons that alternate between reviewing and celebrating our AISL Core Values, customized group interventions, and evidence-based child protection curriculum. The Child Protection curriculum provides students with an opportunity to learn skills involving personal safety, touching safety and assertiveness to recognize, refuse and report unsafe situations.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

*What is the structure of the AISL Early Childhood program?*

Our Early Childhood will mix both three-year-olds and four-year-olds currently grouped into two classes. Our program is structured around overarching Units of Study underpinned by the [District of Columbia Early Learning Standards](#) which guide intentional and explicit planning and teaching.

In a multi-age setting, students are able to consistently engage in project-based learning that focuses on interaction, respect, connection, dialogue, collaboration, problem-solving, autonomy and a quest for knowledge. Students ask questions, discover, explore and inquire in order to make sense of the world around them. Equally essential to the program, is the focus on the children learning pre-reading and pre-writing skills and early number sense.

*How is the learning different and what remains the same in a multi-age program? Does the class size change?*

Class sizes and adult-to-student ratios remain the same for Nest groupings, and due to this, are well-balanced in specialist classes for greater personalization of learning. Each Nest is staffed with three educators; one EC Teacher and two Instructional Assistants with a ratio of one teacher to eight students (across the all EC teachers, IAs and Specialist teachers). Instructional assistants join specialist classes, creating an adult-to-student ratio of one teacher to four students in PE, Performing Arts, Library lessons and Mindfulness sessions.

*How does the program incorporate groupings to enhance learning for my child?*

### **Nests**

Children belong to a distinct, core group, called a Nest, that is led by the designated Early Childhood Teacher. The Nest acts as a base for a specific-group of students. Within this structure there is the ability to focus on development of social-emotional skills in action within a small, safe, united, familiar group where children feel comfortable in discussion, exploration and interaction related to relationship building, problem solving and

student-initiated inquiries and topics. The partnership between home and school is made here as the Nest Teacher is the point of contact for parents.

### Flexible groupings

For all learners, learning takes place and is reinforced across a variety of contexts that are purposefully constructed by the teachers to accommodate student need, social-emotional growth and development and interest.

Within Nests, students will work with their peers in whole and small groups as well as receive one-to-one support from teachers and instructional assistants. Learning activities within these structures may be focused on differentiated needs as related to skill development or student choice depending on interest. Generally, specific skills embedded in unit plans are targeted in this grouping structure and include literacy and math development.

Across Nests, students work together in various learning centers that target both skills and interests as related to the visual and performing arts as well as fine motor development. This generally happens during center time where teachers are able to group children across the two Nests based on learning needs and next step learning opportunities.

### *How will my child benefit from the multi-aged program?*

It is natural for children of different ages and in varying grade levels to come together to learn. We learn in new and rich ways from people older and younger than ourselves throughout our lives. Older learners have the opportunity to thrive when given opportunities and responsibilities to show younger children something new. Peer teaching reinforces knowledge and skills. Children in multi-age classrooms develop a strong sense of community through play and learning alongside older and younger peers.

### *Will the older children be adequately challenged in a multi-age classroom?*

Learning is not a linear process. There is no research or rule that suggests that learning happens with same-age bands. When students learn alongside younger peers, they have the freedom to develop at their own pace without feeling pressure to meet a single set of grade-level learning outcomes. They do not feel left behind if they have not yet mastered a concept or skill. Every child develops at their own rate, but this is even more true in early childhood.

Through constant observation and interaction, teachers notice the signs of 'readiness' in acquiring skills and provide plenty of opportunities for the children to practice and move towards mastery in a variety of rich and engaging ways. For focused instruction, all of our students work with teachers in one-to-one engagements as well as small groups to personalize instruction. Teachers differentiate learning experiences and instructional

strategies related to social-emotional development and the cognitive outcomes of the program such as early literacy and numeracy skills. Play-based activities develop and reinforce essential skills such as phonological awareness, fine motor, number sense and spatial awareness. The learning structures and experiences provided in the early childhood program allow the children to easily move into our Kindergarten when appropriate.

### *How will the teachers measure my child's progress?*

Teachers and instructional assistants constantly observe student engagement and progress on a daily basis. Each child's progress is tracked throughout the week and will be accessible through Toddle (our online platform). Pedagogical documentation affords us the opportunity to engage students, teachers and parents in the progress of our children's learning as follows:

- Our learners can observe their own work and become inspired and empowered when they note their own growth.
- Our families are able to see learning and growth in their children, consistently.
- Our teaching teams are able to engage in reflective dialogue which creates a culture of transparency and inspiration and leads to more intentional planning for next-step learning. Throughout this process, teachers and instructional assistants discover new insight into the children's processes of learning, their interests and passions, and their next steps for engaging in new and more in-depth experiences.

### *What are the accommodations for snack/lunch time?*

The EC children will be provided time to eat and socialize across the day. Staff members are assigned duties during these times to help support the children in learning to eat independently and socialize appropriately. Please see the timetable shared earlier for the timings of these.

When providing snacks and lunches for children, please choose food and beverages that are low in fat and sugar and are minimally processed. Fruit and vegetables, low-fat dairy products such as milk and yogurt, and whole-grain foods including whole-wheat tortillas, bread, and cereal are encouraged. Lean meats, seafood (or alternatives for vegetarians), eggs, beans and pulses can also be added to ensure that there is a balanced spread in children's snack and lunchboxes.

Less-healthy food portions must be significantly smaller compared to the other food groups. Students who do have a larger portion of unhealthy options in their snack or lunch box will be asked to consume the items at home, to ensure that we get the best out of the children in the classroom. With regards to drinks, the school promotes water as the preferred drink option, but if this is not possible then a low sugar content juice is an alternative choice. EC students will not be able to drink carbonated drinks as part of their snack or lunch.

*Is there an opportunity for my child to take a nap during the afternoon session?*

As indicated in the timetable earlier, there is time allocated to having a rest / nap in the afternoon for those children who need it.