



Privilege and Responsibility

Jennifer Woodruff, December 2005

When we first began planning La Escuelita in the fall of 2002, we began by discussing the core values of our school. We agreed on three values. First: bilingualism is good and languages are best learned when children are young. Second: that our school should be a welcoming community to families from diverse backgrounds. Third: the curriculum should be primarily play based with some teacher directed activities.

We are always working toward better reflecting these values in our program. Recently, we have become focused on the second value. We have done well including families of diverse racial and ethnical backgrounds and hiring a teaching staff that includes diverse backgrounds. We have families of a variety of structures, such as two dads, two moms, single parents, mothers and grandmothers raising children together, and so on.

We have achieved some level of socio-economic diversity. Many families in our school have reduced tuition; last year we reduced tuition by a total of \$65,000 for approximately 20% of our families. This money is included in our budget and not dependent on annual fundraising. We have been thinking hard and asking people about other ways to make La Escuelita a viable option for families who are not able to afford the full tuition.

Because of our school schedule, working families must arrange separate childcare outside of our preschool hours. This is burdensome financially as well as logistically. Providing a day care room for children from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. is something we are very focused on.

Families who hire nannies to care for their children around the preschool hours have expressed to us the difficulty they face when their nannies point out that other families' caregivers have a higher salary, or their concern that their nanny will leave for a higher paying position. We are not sure how to address this issue in a way that supports families as well as acknowledges the rights of nannies to find better paying jobs. We welcome your ideas.

We would like all of the members of our community to take a moment to reflect on the privilege and responsibility of being involved in a diverse community. The privilege is that La Escuelita is one of the few places where families can connect with each other on a personal level, seeing each one of our children growing together and visiting one another's homes. It is a place in which the "other" transforms into a real person. The responsibility includes being thoughtful and respectful of one another and communicating directly with other members of the community, without making assumptions about others before having the chance to get to know them.

We hope that you all have come to appreciate that these three values help us to create more than a bilingual preschool. Our goal is to create a community of families that can learn from each other, respect each other and enjoy each others' company.