

# Why We Love Creative Minds

Creative Minds CDC Newsletter: Special Edition, September 2011

## Updates from PITC

As most of you know, we received a grant last year for PITC (Program for Infant/Toddler Care) training for most of our teachers. Through this program, our teachers attend training workshops on Thursday evenings and receive individualized feedback after classroom observations. The goal of the program is to help us all become better teachers by strengthening our teacher-child-family relationships.

## Parent Partnerships

The PITC training in August focused on building positive parent partnerships. This is something our teachers have always worked hard to establish. Some of the systems we already have in place include:

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During a recent staff development training, our PITC workshop leader, Tina Jiminez, offered us this question to ponder:

**“Why do you like working at Creative Minds?”**

Why should parents enroll their children here?”

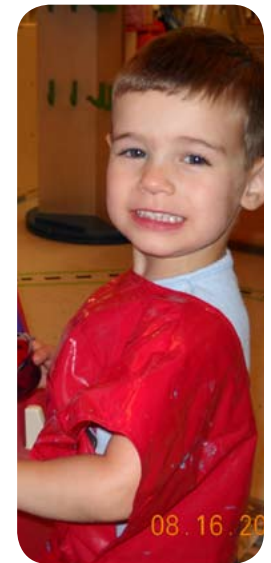
Here’s what our teachers had to say:



## Learning Together

As a teacher in this program, I am constantly learning alongside your child. This teaches your child that we can learn together. Working to learn together as a community builds relationships, a sense of togetherness, and shared responsibility.

—Teacher Jane



## Emotional Availability

Our teachers are emotionally invested and available in the children’s lives. This creates a comfortable environment in which the children can feel free to share success as well as failure with the teachers. This emotional connection enables the child to feel more confident in their activities and more adventurous — things which open their eyes to different interests. —Teacher Kate

- Checking in during pick-up and drop-off times
- Messages on the door
- Messages on dry erase boards
- Two preschool blogs
- Newsletters
- Scheduled phone conversations
- Emails
- Flickr stream
- Digital photo frames in all classrooms
- Daily sheet in infant room

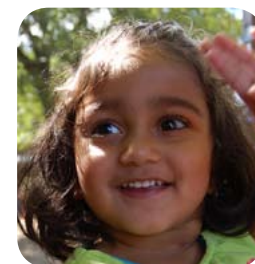
### Parent Conferences

One of the strong recommendations that came out of this training was that we need to add formal parent conferences. Starting this year, we will have annual parent conferences scheduled with the lead teacher of each classroom. At the conference, teachers will be able to share the assessment/portfolio information with parents and get feedback about the parents' vision for the child's upcoming year. Watch for conference sign-ups later this year, probably before the holiday season.



### Freedom of Exploration

In a Reggio school, I believe that children are the explorers who drive the school's direction. They are like birds: they have freedom and enjoy every minute of it. I wish I were a child again so I could be here at Creative Minds to have these experiences.  
—*Teacher Maria*



### Life Skills

A Reggio program like ours teaches children life skills — compassion, wisdom, sensitivity, tenderness, insight, patience, and most importantly, freedom of choice to explore who we are as individuals and as members of a community. —*Teacher Michelle*



## Welcoming Community

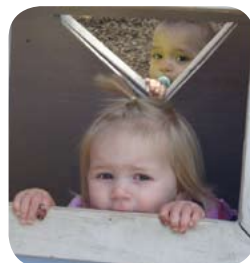
I have learned so much in the short time I have been a part of the Creative Minds team. From Richa, I have learned the beauty of the Reggio philosophy. From my fellow teachers, I have learned how to better reach my students. From my students, I have learned how to embrace life and explore the world with an open mind. From all of you, I have learned the true meaning of community. From day one, I was welcomed with open arms into this family. You have given me your kindness, your trust, and your friendship. And that is exactly what my fellow teachers and I offer to you and your children. Creative Minds is not only a place of education, but rather a community, a family, of eager teachers and learners. I only hope you are as glad as I am to be a part of it. —*Teacher Susan*



## Openness and Flexibility

I love that our program is very flexible and focuses on each individual student. We are very hands-on, which helps the children feel comfortable and engaged. We make our own play-dough, paint together on the floor, and make music with instruments and songs from around the world at circle time. These experiences help the children gain confidence while helping them to connect with each other and with the teachers. I also love that our open-door policy allows parents to come be a part of our classroom at any time.

—*Teacher Brooke*



## Freedom & Flexibility

The real answer to “why I like working here” would be pages long. If I had to pick one thing, it would be the low ratios and our freedom to follow the children’s lead.

This enables us to meet their needs and support their development as much as possible.  
—Teacher Lesley



## Respect for Relationships

This school is special because we understand and respect the needs of each child, just as a family does at home. Kids are not all the same, so care shouldn’t be either. We can learn from the parents and also share our insights with them. That partnership is very valuable. —Teacher Sandy



## Individual Connections

I love the balance we have at this school between keeping busy and taking the time to show the children that they are loved and cared for as individuals. I also enjoy being a part of this team of teachers who work together and watch out for each other. I really enjoy connecting with the parents too, and letting them know how much their children are loved here. This is a great place to be! —Teacher Hortensia

## Family Atmosphere

I adore being with children. The school atmosphere is also extremely friendly and comfortable, like being with family. Our director is wonderfully supportive and a very strong leader. She has encouraged me to continue my education, helping me to become a better teacher as well as a better parent. We could work with kids anywhere, but this deep family-like connection is unique to this school. I'm so glad to be here! —*Teacher Polet*



## Extended Family

I love how much this school is like a home. I love to see parents hanging out in the kitchen, sharing a favorite recipe or just enjoying a cup of coffee. We're like a big extended family! —*Teacher Romina*



## Authenticity and Respect

Young children are the great love of my life, and I searched long and hard to find a school community that loves and respects them as deeply as I do. At Creative Minds, I found a family of teachers, parents and children who share authentic relationships based on respect and genuine love. The school is continuously evolving as we seek to serve our families even better. Here, children are not seen as “pre-adults.” They are complete, competent, unique, intelligent individuals exactly as they are, deserving of the same respect as anyone else. Our job as teachers in early childhood is not to merely “watch them” while their parents are away, but to provide them with the opportunities they need to develop to their fullest potential. It is our great honor to be their guides and co-discoverers on the unique and precious journey called childhood. I still marvel every day at how blessed I am to be a part of this spectacular community. —*Teacher Jennifer*





### A Truly Unique Approach

I love that Creative Minds is available to Bay Area parents, providing a strong Reggio-inspired program in a land of old-fashioned early childhood programs that are essentially just watered-down elementary education. What is appropriate for an older child is not necessarily appropriate in early childhood, so the Reggio philosophy offers a positive alternative. We are steeped in active learning, focused on nurturing young children, and dedicated to the project approach in which authentic learning emerges directly from children's interests. If we are looking for a creative generation, we have to start by giving our children permission to think outside the box, problem solve, negotiate and provide opportunities for explorations around their interests. Rote learning and direct instruction will have a strong role when children get to elementary school, but these drill-and-kill programs do not cultivate creative thinking and problem solving in early childhood education. I am so glad to be working with a community of wonderful teachers who are right with me when we question ourselves and want to be on the cutting edge of early childhood education. Their hard work is such an inspiration for me. We are also very fortunate to have a community of such caring and committed parents who are so vested in their children's development. —*Teacher Richa, Founder and Director*

