

Mandala Children's House
Spring 2011

★ Flexible Staff ★

★ Occupational Therapist Consultant for Classroom & Parents ★
★ Helping Children with Differing Abilities ★

★ STAYING OPEN to CHANGE

We keep exploring new ways to meet our students' and parents' needs at Mandala. Our teachers and staff work very hard to keep improving our school. We are always looking at ways of making our classrooms more effective, and we search for ways to help as many children as we can to be successful learners.

Our staff meetings result in action and change. Our entire staff meets weekly for 1 ½ hour meetings every Tuesday. We discuss children's needs, create and improve curriculum, do staff training, and take a deeper look at what has been working or not working during the previous week. We feel very fortunate to have a teaching staff that is committed to growth. Out of these ongoing staff discussions have come the ideas to offer a specialized Friendship Class to teach social skills, to make changes in our Class Sessions starting this July, and to hire an Occupational Therapist as a classroom consultant to support our teachers and to be a resource for parents. In January, the teachers voiced their desire to attend a weekend Kindergarten Readiness Conference, so Mandala paid for all to attend. We have also listened to parent feedback about the timing of school in the fall, which has led to changes in our yearly start time.

★ New!! OT CONSULTANT for the CLASSROOM

We have added more support for the classroom. We are all thrilled to have added a new dimension to our services for children and families at Mandala. We have recently contracted with **Atty Rosas, OTR/L** to work with us as a consultant *to provide activities and training to benefit all children in our classrooms.*

Atty will consult with Mandala on a regular basis for several hours per month to assist our teachers. Atty is a licensed Occupational Therapist who also happens to be the parent of two young boys in our program. Her specialty is working with children from birth to five years of age. She comes with 10 years of experience working with typically developing children, as well as children who have particular needs (such as sensory integration, developmental delays, autism spectrum disorders, and ADHD).

Occupational Therapists help children coordinate their movement and organize information coming from their senses, which enhances their cognitive skills. We know that all young children need movement, so we are building in more of that into the classroom with Atty's help. Atty has already begun to observe our classrooms and will help us incorporate new play activities and sensory materials to help the children regulate their bodies, improve coordination, listen and process information, and "calm their motors."

You may see some new play materials and props being used in the classroom. We will be adding more "tools" to help kids learn and play using their bodies. Some materials will help kids get the deep pressure, heavy lifting, and motor development they need, such as push carts and scooter boards. Deep tactile input helps organize the sensory system, increase focus and level of alertness. Bouncing balls, spinners, and jumpers will stimulate children's brains in a different way. We have also added some small chairs that offer more body support and close comfort, which helps kids focus at group. You might see some kids wearing black belts that look like Superman belts. These are weighted



“Miracle Belts” that help facilitate children’s self-calming, balance, and increased body awareness.

OT consultation is also available to parents for a fee. Atty is willing to meet with you at Mandala on a *fee-per-hour basis* to talk with you individually about your child if you are interested.



Some children can use extra help. If your child seems to *lack body awareness* and tends to *bump into things* or people, *appears clumsy* or has *difficulty with coordination*, *exerts too much force when playing with others*, has *poor small motor skills*, seems *extra sensitive*

to food, smells, tags, clothes, touch, or sound, or is *always in motion* and has *difficulty paying attention*, then you may want to talk more with Atty. She could be a great resource for you.

A “Sensory Diet” • Atty can design a program of sensory activities that you can do at home with your child to help him or her calm and focus. This is called a “sensory diet.” She is willing to do in-class observations, sensory assessments, and some direct, hands-on assistance for a child in the classroom, as well.

If we think your child could benefit from a sensory home program, we may suggest that you set up an hour’s consultation with Atty to discuss your child. We do not want to pressure parents. However, we do want to be proactive and help each child get the enhancement he or she needs at the earliest age possible. We have seen so many children show remarkable growth and confidence after working with an occupational therapist. OT offers a fun and easy way for children to feel better inside their own bodies!

For more information • Talk with Anne Kangas, *Family Services Director*, (251-8633), if you would like to know more. We have flyers in the office, too. You may also contact Atty Rosas directly (see above).

★ HELPING CHILDREN with DIFFERING ABILITIES

Today we are well aware that we are seeing many more children with neuro-developmental challenges in our school, whether this shows itself in speech and language delays, in processing problems, in social skills delays, or in sensory problems (e.g. difficulty regulating bodies and impulses). At Mandala, we try very hard to be inclusive and work with children with differing needs and abilities. However, we aren’t always able to meet *every* child’s need in our particular environment. Many children with differing abilities do better with fewer children in a more highly structured environment, with less sensory stimulation, with one-on-one facilitation, with the use of communication assistance devices, and with a professional staff trained to work with developmental differences.

At Mandala, we are committed to trying to find what each child needs. This often looks different with every child and every situation. Sometimes we can make adaptations in the classroom that helps things work well. Sometimes the help we give is helping parents to find the services their child needs, and then helping them to move on to take advantage of those services. We always try our best to help children get connected with the program or services that will give them the skills they truly need. What typically happens in these situations is that a child will leave our program for a time, attend another program and build the missing skills, then return to Mandala when s/he is able to be successful and utilize what our program has to offer. We are always sensitive to balancing the needs of the individual child with the needs of *all* the children in the classroom.

**OT Helps Kids
Organize Information
Coming from Their
Senses to Their Brain**

OT is especially good for...

- Self-Regulation
- Learning and Development
- Fine and Gross Motor Skills
- Listening and Following Directions
- Balance and Coordination
- Movement Awareness
- Sensitivities (taste, touch, sound)
- Handwriting & Eye-Hand Coordination

Occupational Therapist • Atty Rosas, OTR
CONSULTATION

Available by Appointment

Call (408) 489-2783

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