



Parent-Toddler Program | Just Toddlers Program | Preschool Program | After-School Program

Community Monthly Newsletter

Issue No. 15 | 11.01.2025

A Year of Growth & New Adventures: Here's to 2025!

Dear Circles & Cycles Community,

Happy New Year!

As we step into another exciting chapter together, we want to take a moment to thank you for your incredible partnership and support throughout the past year. It's been a journey filled with growth, learning, and joy, and we couldn't have done it without you.

Our newsletter has blossomed into more than just a platform for updates—it's become a celebration of our shared milestones and a space where we can exchange wisdom and ideas. This year, we're **thrilled to involve you in the newsletter writing process**, making it a true collaboration. Together, we'll capture the magic of your children's milestones and create a shared experience that reflects the heart of our community.

We're also celebrating the tremendous growth of our Circles & Cycles team! Over the past year, we've welcomed several wonderful new members: **Malvika**, our Preschool & Just Toddler Facilitator, **Nisha & Arpita**, who have strengthened our administration, **Bindiya**, our Instructional Coach, **Wendy**, our new Floater Facilitator, **Neha**, our Social Media Manager & our Music and Occupational Therapists, **Sara & Aradhana**.

In addition to expanding our team, we've proudly introduced the **Just Toddler Program**—a bridge between Parent-Toddler and Preschool programs, born from recognizing a vital need in our community.

This past year has also been filled with firsts worth celebrating: *Our first birthday, our first field trip, our first parent coffee morning, our first Q&A session*, where we heard your invaluable insights. Each of these moments has strengthened our community and brought us closer together.

As we look ahead, we're excited to embrace even more firsts and continue spreading the values of the Reggio Emilia philosophy far and wide. Together, let's make 2025 a year of curiosity, collaboration, and discovery.

Here's to a wonderful year ahead!

Warm Regards,
The Circles & Cycles Team

THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY SUPPORT FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

In Collaboration:

*Ms. Angela Mee Lee | Pedagogista at C&C
(Written alongside ChatGPT)*

The early years are crucial for a child's development, shaping their brain, body, and social skills. As Dr. Jack Shonkoff explains, "Early experiences affect the architecture of the maturing brain" (Shonkoff, 2009). A 2011 study in *The Lancet* found that high-quality early childhood programs lead to better learning, behavior, and health outcomes later in life (Engle et al., 2011).

The Reggio Emilia approach believes that every child deserves access to quality education in a caring and inclusive environment. It values children as capable and curious and emphasizes respect, collaboration, and community.

At Circles & Cycles (C&C), we bring this vision of inclusion for all by pioneering a thoughtful and supportive program that integrates the skills of an Occupational Therapist (OT) and Music Therapist (MT).

A Unique Program at Circles & Cycles Preschool

At C&C, we aim to provide a holistic approach by including an OT and MT in our daily programs.

• **The Occupational Therapist's Role**

The OT observes the children and designs selected provocations to support their needs. This might include sensory-rich play, fine motor tasks, or outdoor obstacle courses to develop coordination and motor skills.

• **The Music Therapist's Role**

The MT co-creates the session alongside Facilitators in song, playing instruments and movement. The MT observes verbal and physical cues and desires from the children and includes this as a part of developing basic elements of music such as beat, rhythm, dynamics, pitch, and movement.

Why This Matters

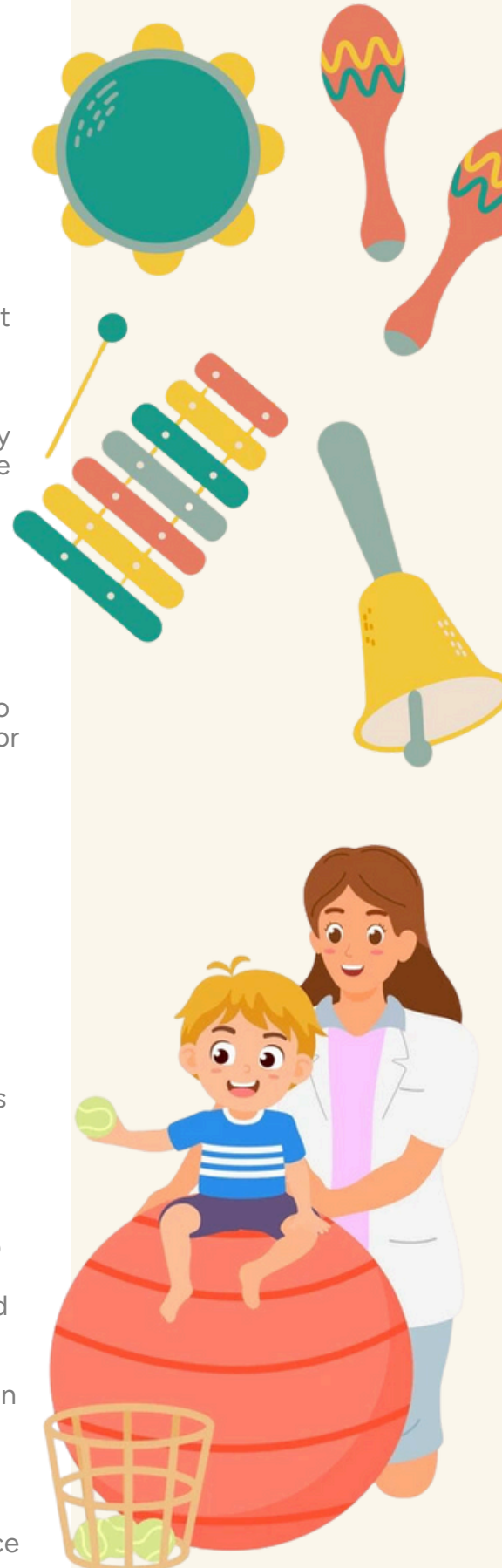
Including therapists in our daily programs ensures that every child's unique needs are supported, creating a nurturing and inclusive environment. This approach:

- Helps children develop essential skills such as self-regulation, coordination, and social interaction.
- Encourages confidence and resilience, empowering children to explore and learn at their own pace.
- Fosters creativity and joy, making real connections to the world around them.

At C&C, we believe when educators and therapists work together in early childhood settings, they create a holistic approach and supportive community that nurtures every aspect of a child's development—cognitive, emotional, physical, and social.

This ensures that inclusivity is not just an idea but a lived experience for everyone.

We hope you enjoy hearing from Ms Aradhana Maniar, our wonderful new Occupational Therapist who has joined the C&C team and launched our new program 'Intentional Movement and Play'.



NURTURING GROWTH THROUGH PLAY: THE POWER OF INTENTIONAL MOVEMENT AND PLAY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

By:
Ms. Aradhana Maniar | Occupational Therapist at C&C

Dear C&C Community,

I'm thrilled to share an exciting new development in our playschool program: our Intentional Movement and Play Program. Designed and led by me, Aradhana, an Occupational Therapist, this program is crafted to support your child's sensory and motor development through fun, engaging activities that promote their overall growth and well-being.

As a parent, you've probably heard about the importance of sensory and motor development during early childhood. However, understanding how deeply these areas are connected to play can make a huge difference in how your child learns and interacts with the world around them. The Intentional Movement and Play Program is designed to foster not just physical growth, but emotional, cognitive, and social development—all in a joyful, play-based environment.

What is the Intentional Movement and Play Program?

This program guides children through activities that specifically promote sensory and motor development. Every session is thoughtfully designed to challenge and enhance your child's motor skills, motor planning, coordination, balance, spatial awareness, and sensory processing abilities.

Through a mix of structured and unstructured play, children participate in activities that align with their developmental journey. These activities might involve interactive group play or provocation-based parallel play, but they all focus on key areas of growth, such as:

- **Balance and Coordination:** Activities like climbing, jumping, and walking on balance beams help develop gross motor skills and body awareness.
- **Motor Skills:** Play that targets specific muscle groups to encourage flexibility, strength, endurance, and range of motion.
- **Motor Planning:** I explicitly teach the children how to ideate, plan, and execute tasks—whether that's navigating a space, engaging in an activity, or solving a challenge.
- **Body Awareness and Spatial Relationships:** Games designed to stimulate the vestibular (balance and movement) and proprioceptive (body awareness) systems help children understand their bodies in space, which is foundational for more complex tasks in the future.

The Benefits of Sensory Motor Development Through Play

You might wonder why sensory motor development is so critical at this stage in your child's life. The reason is simple: sensory motor skills lay the foundation for nearly every area of development, from language and cognitive abilities to social interactions and emotional regulation.



Here are just a few of the incredible benefits of incorporating sensory motor activities into your child's daily routine:

- **Improved Physical Coordination:** Activities that focus on balance, strength, and coordination help children develop better control over their bodies, which is essential for tasks like running, jumping, drawing, and even writing.
- **Enhanced Cognitive Functioning:** Physical movement and sensory exploration are deeply connected to brain development. When children engage in these activities, they improve their ability to focus, solve problems, and process information—skills that will support them as they grow and learn.
- **Social-Emotional Benefits:** Through movement-based play, children practice important social skills like taking turns, sharing, and emotional regulation. These skills are crucial for building positive relationships with peers and feeling confident in social settings.
- **Sensory Regulation:** Some children may struggle with processing sensory input from their environment, such as becoming overwhelmed by bright lights or loud noises. Sensory play activities provide opportunities for children to experience various types of sensory input in a controlled, supportive way, helping them regulate their responses to everyday stimuli.
- **Increased Independence:** As children develop motor skills and learn how to navigate the world around them, they gain greater independence. Tasks like dressing, eating, and participating in group activities become more manageable, which boosts their self-esteem and confidence.

How You Can Support Your Child at Home

While the program provides a strong foundation for sensory motor development, there are many ways you can reinforce these skills at home:

- **Encourage Active Play:** Give your child opportunities to engage in physical play at home—whether it's running, jumping, climbing, or dancing. This type of play helps build coordination and strength.
- **Sensory Play at Home:** Set up simple sensory activities like water play, sand play, or finger painting to help your child explore different textures and sensory experiences.
- **Create a Routine:** A structured routine that includes time for movement, rest, and focused activities can help children feel secure and better regulate their energy levels.
- **Interactive Games:** Play games that involve taking turns, balancing, or using small objects like building blocks or puzzles. These activities promote fine and gross motor skills while encouraging social interaction.

In Conclusion

Our Intentional Movement and Play Program is not just a fun activity—it's a vital tool in fostering your child's growth and development. By integrating play with intentional, therapeutic interventions, I'm helping children develop not only physical skills but also the emotional and cognitive tools they need for a smooth and successful learning journey. I'm excited to see the positive impact this program will have on your child's development, and I look forward to supporting them as they grow, play, and thrive!



GETTING YOUR "VILLAGE" ON THE SAME PAGE

By:

Karyn Mendes | Facilitator at C&C

(Written alongside ChatGPT)

"It takes a village to raise a child"

Grandparents have long been recognized as an important part of a child's "village", playing a pivotal role in a child's development. Research underscores the importance of intergenerational relationships in promoting emotional, social, and cognitive growth in young children. This article identifies the significance of grandparents and attempts to offer tips for how they can engage in the upbringing of your children.

1. Supporting Parenting Choices

Studies on early childhood development emphasize the importance of consistent parenting approaches in fostering secure attachments and reducing behavioral confusion. Grandparents can enhance this consistency by adopting the parenting styles and strategies chosen by the parents. This alignment not only strengthens the child's sense of security but also lends to a cohesive family dynamic.

For example, research on gentle parenting highlights the benefits of positive reinforcement and empathetic communication. By mirroring these methods, grandparents contribute to the child's emotional well-being while maintaining harmony with the parents.

2. Storytelling for Cognitive and Emotional Development

Cognitive psychology recognizes storytelling as a powerful medium for teaching moral values, enhancing memory, and sparking imagination. Grandparents' stories often carry rich cultural and familial traditions, providing children with a sense of identity and belonging.

For instance, narrating tales from one's own life can shape a child's emotional intelligence and problem-solving skills. Storytelling sessions also strengthen the grandparent-grandchild bond, which research suggests is critical for the child's social development.

3. Physical Activity for Healthy Development

Physical activity is essential for a child's motor skill development and overall health, and grandparents who stay fit can actively participate in these activities. Engaging in shared outdoor play, such as gardening or walking, not only fosters physical fitness but also encourages intergenerational bonding. Moreover, grandparents' active lifestyles serve as role models, instilling healthy habits in young children.

Studies in gerontology highlight that regular exercise improves not only physical but also mental health in older adults, enabling them to contribute more effectively to their grandchildren's lives.

4. The Science of Positive Language

Neuroscientific research demonstrates that positive language stimulates areas of the brain associated with trust and empathy, promoting a child's self-esteem and emotional resilience. By focusing on constructive communication, grandparents can nurture a supportive environment for the child.

For example, instead of saying, "Don't touch that," rephrasing to, "Let's explore something safe together," shifts the focus to a collaborative and positive interaction. This approach fosters cooperation and reduces resistance.

5. Validating Emotions

Developmental psychology emphasizes the importance of validating children's emotions as a foundational step in teaching self-regulation. By acknowledging feelings and offering guidance, grandparents can help children navigate their emotional landscapes.

For example, phrases like, "It's okay to feel frustrated; let's figure out how to fix this together," demonstrate empathy while introducing problem-solving strategies. This validation supports the child's emotional intelligence and ability to cope with challenges.

6. Modeling Emotional Regulation

Children are natural imitators, often learning behaviors by observing trusted adults. Grandparents who exhibit patience, calmness, and thoughtful responses model effective emotional regulation. Techniques such as deep breathing, mindfulness, or pausing before reacting can serve as practical demonstrations for the child.

Research in child psychology suggests that children who witness consistent emotional regulation are better equipped to manage their own emotions, contributing to healthier relationships and improved mental health.

Final Thoughts

Grandparents are a vital part of the "village" that supports a child's early development. The intergenerational bond they create not only enhances the child's social and emotional skills but also enriches the grandparents' own lives. Embracing this role with intentionality and love ensures a lasting, positive impact on the entire family.



WELCOMING A NEW FACE TO THE CIRCLES & CYCLES FAMILY

Wendy Zuzarte

Floater Facilitator | Circles & Cycles

*Joined Circles & Cycles, as a substitute facilitator
& third facilitator when needed*



Wendy joins Circles & Cycles with over seven years of experience working with infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children.

Her enthusiastic approach to education is grounded in hands-on experience, recognizing that each child is unique and their learning styles are distinct.

From donning a clown's wig to sporting funny costumes, Wendy's openness to embracing silliness as part of the early learning journey is a wonderful addition to our Circles & Cycles family.

Her philosophy is deeply rooted in the belief that a teacher is first a parent, and her passion for her profession shines through her unwavering focus on placing the child's needs as the top priority.

Wendy is currently undergoing training both on the job and through our workshops, and we already see her wholeheartedly embracing our vision and mission as her guiding principles.

She firmly believes in the mantra:
"Love what you do, and you'll never work a day in your life."





Facilitator Love!



Rumi explored colorful creativity!



Maya being serenaded by Ms.Sara



Barbecuing with Hera & Shay



Storytime with Veer & Liam



Our little chefs, Kobe & Sakura



Paint, Play, and Build



Hey! That's me!



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