

# Habibi's Hutch Preschool - Teacher Handbook

(updated September 2018)

Welcome to Habibi's! Here you will find some guidelines and reminders as you begin/continue your time at our schoolhouse. It is important to remember that routines/practices evolve, just like the world around us, so never be afraid to look to one of our seasoned teachers for answers. DON'T KNOW? JUST ASK! :)

Before you begin teaching, you will need:

- A valid driver's license, passport, or ID
- College transcript or High School Diploma
- Copy of Social Security Card
- Completed application
- Fill out this contact form:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=10S05HdNGSuY4sJLh16wONbPekSbhU7LatYVi-EeYP84>

- Create a free account at [http://extensiononline.tamu.edu/courses/child\\_care.php](http://extensiononline.tamu.edu/courses/child_care.php) AND complete the course below:

## **Abusive Head Trauma (Shaken Baby Syndrome): A Guide for Child Care Providers**

Abusive head trauma, which includes head injuries from child abuse such as Shaken Baby Syndrome, is the leading cause of death in cases of child abuse in the United States. This 2-hour course will help you better understand the dangers of abusive head trauma and how to take steps to protect the children in your care from this type of abuse. This course was developed and produced by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service of the Texas A&M University System in cooperation with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Child Care Licensing Division, and using funds provided by the Texas Workforce Commission.

**Enroll Now!**

**Credit Hours:** 2 hr

**Course Price:** Free

**Certificate Fee :** Free

This will also be where you go to complete other required professional development hours. Many classes are free, but should you be eager to take a paid class, just forward your receipt to our email to get reimbursed. After completing a class, take a screenshot of your certificate and forward it through email as well.

- Locate First Aid Kits
- Review the Allergy List

## Basics:

- Arrive on time.
  - We rely on each teacher to be on time in order to maintain safe ratios.
  - If you are ever running late, call the school to let Andrew know.
- Stay aware of your surroundings.
  - No cell phones on playground. Only main nap room teachers should be taking photographs with their phones on the playground.
  - It is great to get involved in an activity with a small group ( painting, clay, etc.), BUT if you are the only one in your area, remember to constantly look around to monitor ALL kiddos in your vicinity.
  - Look at all areas of the playground. Make sure every area has adequate teacher coverage. For example: if there are 3 teachers in one area, and only 1 in an area with too many children, then relocate yourself, or ask another teacher if they will relocate. (Try to keep at a 10:1 ratio)
  - When you're in a particular area of the playground, watch each and every child. Move around so as to give yourself a different view of all children in your area.
  - If you need to leave your area, ask another teacher if they can take your spot, and make sure other teachers are not gone. If so, wait till they return, so we can maintain proper ratios.
  - Clean and organize your area, while accounting for all kids in your area.
  - NO reading books or drawing pictures for kids while on the playground. Keep eyes up and aware of all the kids close to you and those that are further away.
- Make sure kids, parents, and teachers know that watching/keeping the kids safe is your #1 priority.
  - Introduce yourselves to parents.
  - If a parent wants to chat, let them know you are listening but need to look around to watch kiddos.
  - If a child is demanding all of your attention, let them know that you care about them and want to play, but you have other kids that you have to watch as well.
  - If a teacher catches your attention... same as above, listen, but watch kiddos! Keep teacher to teacher conversations brief.
- You can park your vehicle on Bert or in the parking lot directly across from the school next to the Human Potential Center. If you bike to work you can lock your bike in the breezeway between the Vamonos and Chones Houses. You can use the snack refrigerator in the Chones House kitchen to keep your lunch and/or drinks cool.

- There is a teacher bathroom in each house. The one in the Chones House is between the Shark and Bamboo nap rooms. In the Vamonos House it is between the two offices.
- There is a daily schedule posted in each house and on a clipboard on the playground. This schedule tells us in which room each teacher is assigned, who the inside\* teacher is, who is serving snack and doing potty party, break times, arrival times and finish times.
- Prospective parents often call for information. Tuition rates are posted near the whiteboard in the hallway between Mango and Hollywood Bano. If they'd like to visit, tell them to go to our website to make an appointment. Inform them there is a wait. If they would like to know about their place on the waitlist, ask them to **email** us. If there is a call for Andrew or Carolina, take a message and write it on the whiteboard in the hallway between Mango and Hollywood.
- If any of you enjoy painting, you can earn extra hours by painting at night, or on the weekends. Please let Andrew know if you are interested.
- Payday is the 3<sup>rd</sup> calendar day of each month. Substitute hours, extra time and time off should be documented on the calendar behind the door of the large office. After one year of employment at HH a teacher receives one week (5 work days) paid summer vacation. In addition, we have a number of paid holidays (if you work 35 hours or more a week): Labor Day, Thanksgiving, one week during Winter Break, MLK Day, Spring Break, Memorial Day, and Independence Day (check calendar online for a complete list). FULL and PART TIME TEACHERS: Each month you may choose to "cash in" your sick day if you have not used it during that month. You may write your average day hours (example 6 or 7.5) on calendar and that will be added to your total hours worked that month. Example: 35 hrs per week divided by 5 days= 7 hours average day.

## OUR HOUSE

When we are inside, the children spend most of their time in their designated nap rooms. There is some flow allowed from one room to another as long as teacher/student ratios are adhered to. It is important for our teachers to remain actively present in their designated room, to know where the children are (and number of children), and to be aware of the situations unfolding. Remember, the safety of our kids is paramount and our interaction as facilitators crucial.

## THE MANGO TANGO ROOM

The Mango Tango Room is the room you walk into upon entering the front door of the Chones House. Here, feel free to take a place on the floor and build with wooden or plastic blocks. You may also find yourself eating a pretend breakfast, zooming cars and trains, or just sitting down reading and discussing a book with a group of inquisitive youngsters. There is also an art area next to the water fountain where you may set up various projects involving markers, crayons, paper, glue, scissors (with intensive supervision!) and whatever else strikes your fancy and the kiddos!

### THE POOL ROOM

Lots of wrestling, jumping and flopping about happens in the Pool Room...and that's just the teacher! Join the romping and feel free to play physically with the kids and throw a soft block or two. Be attentive and ready to soothe bonked heads or help clarify the boundaries and ground rules between the kids and for yourself. You may need to keep an eye on some of the smaller children and remind some of the older kids to pay attention around the people not in action. Children are not allowed to play, swing, or do any other monkey-like activities on the stairs! There are also art/block/reading stations set up around the perimeter of the Pool Room where the kiddos can play who choose not to participate in the wrestling mayhem.

### THE LAVA ROOM

The Lava Room is the red brick room by the back door that leads to the lunch playground. It is equipped for block and car play, art projects, collage making, and whatever else strikes your fancy, like reading, fort building, resting, role-playing and general lounging. As with Pool Room, there should be no active play on the stairs/rails.

### THE DUNGEON, BAMBOO AND SHARK ROOMS

These three rooms are divided according to age (generally ranging from 2 to 3 years old) with the youngest children in the Dungeon Room. Each room is set up for age-appropriate play, including books, blocks, art supplies, music and wrestling.

### THE VAMONOS HOUSE

The Vamonos House is the building adjacent to the main playground. This house is dedicated to the Vamonos kids, who are the youngest Hutchsters, ranging in age from 18 months to 2 years old. It is full of toys, art supplies, wooden and cardboard blocks, books and a variety of other play possibilities. The youngest of the Vamonos

kids come in with Carolina every day from 10:30 through lunch. The napping young'uns sleep in either Purple Planet (in the back near the restroom) or The Tree House Room (the main room upon entry). Gates should remain up in the main room separating the kitchen, hallways, and diaper area from the play area.

## THE PLAYGROUND

Our playground affords limitless possibilities for the creative and inquisitive minds of our little ones. There is a lot of space and countless objects and activities ranging from potion-making supplies to complex spaceships equipped with blasters to carefully painted bodies and elaborate battles. We encourage non-traditional use of the elements in our open-ended playground as long as they pose no serious threat or injury to anyone. **Remember that you can and should ask teachers if you are uncertain.** Just as the kids flow around the playground, so too do the teachers. If you are supervising garden area, be aware of gates at all times. If a nearby teacher has to move to help someone, move to that area to help supervise while they're gone. We make sure to spread out so all the areas can be covered visually. Please keep teacher to teacher conversations brief. Join a group in a game they have created or tell a story, read a book or assist in developing an idea or colorful potion. Encourage/support climbing efforts and, as always, be there to show compassion when someone falls or is frustrated and angry with another child. There are other important things to remember while on the playground. When a child asks to go potty, retrieve an item from their inside cubby, or makes some other request to go inside, direct them to the teacher nearest the Vamonos or Bamboo Room door who will then call out to the inside teacher which child is walking in and for what reason. Always make sure the inside teacher acknowledges your voice before letting anyone in. Outside cubbies are located in Sector 7. If Sector 7 is closed, walk them to the gate and encourage them to quickly take care of their cubby business!

## STRUCTURED ACTIVITIES AND THE DAILY ROUTINE

Traditional preschool approaches employ structured activities as the framework for learning and free play as a break from those activities. At HH unstructured exploration occupies most of the children's time while structured activities are the exception. As such, they present a different challenge from that of supervising inside the house or on the playground. You may find that free activities, whether they are initiated by a teacher or by the children often take on a structure of their own. We believe these freely formed structures that the children create offer the greatest

opportunity for constructing their own knowledge and promoting their interest in learning. For this reason, most of the teaching work at HH occurs in these free environments.

Although most of our day allows unplanned activities to surface, there are necessary parts that constitute the daily routine. These necessary parts can be thought of as structured activities and include lunch, potty party and nap time. In addition there are optional structured activities in which an individual chooses to participate within a group. These include snacks, circle time, cooking day, and art class. First, we'll go over the daily routine.

### LUNCH

Around 11:15 every day the kids all go inside to wash up for lunch. We announce this time with a bell. We ask all the children to go inside at this time to wash their hands and get their lunch. They decide for themselves if they will join circle time. As the children rush inside, the Lunch Cleanup Teacher should go first into Pool Room to assist with circle time. All other teachers should be supervising the kids as they ring the bell, and walk into the chones house via the Lava room door, to wash hands and locate their lunch. The dishes teacher will supervise kids as they go from circle time to wash hands in the Hollywood bano and back outside again, lunch in hand. All other teachers will stay outside at the lunch tables to help open lunch boxes, serve drinks and help with spills. A list of any and all children having food allergies or special diets is posted both in the lunch area and in the kitchen. Please make yourself aware of these allergies. We ask that the children refrain from standing up while they eat and that upon completion of lunch they put away their trash and lunchbox. After cleaning they are free to play. Some choose to do this shortly after sitting down and others may sit down for an hour eating and visiting with the people around. Note that although we require everyone to come in and wash their hands, we do not insist that they eat. This keeps a balance between maintaining healthy routines and allowing the individual to make their own decisions. It is, however, in keeping with the philosophy of HH to remind the child that the opportunity for eating comes only at certain times and to encourage them to pay attention to the nutritional needs of their body. Of course, nearly all the kids like to eat lunch and enjoy the social aspect of gathering together but this example affords us a view of Habibi's philosophy in practice. Always be aware of the risk of choking. Lunch is often a hectic time. Help multiple kids with their lunches. Do not sit long with any one or two kiddos.

### NAP TIME

Naptime routines start around 12:30 when Carolina hollers, “VAAAMANOSS!!” and begins taking in the youngest kids. The movement is from the playground into the Vamonos House, Pool, Dungeon, Shark, Mango Tango, Lava and Bamboo. The children are divided according to age and level of development. Each nap room has its own routine that is set by the teacher in charge of that particular group. The rituals may include but are not limited to the following: allowing each child a drink of water (very important during the hotter months), singing, stretching, reading books and poems, telling stories, or small group discussions. Children in underwear should try to go potty before falling asleep. Think of this time as an opportunity to have more one-on-one time with the same group of kids everyday where we can share personal interests, favorite songs or stories and develop themes.

Remember that naptime is a part of the day in which we follow a downward trajectory, moving from high energy to a more restful state and it is up to us to help the kiddos make this transition. When the lights have been turned out some teachers turn on soft music and tell or read stories as eyelids grow heavy. Back and head rubs also work wonders. Not all the kids will fall asleep but everyone should be quiet enough so that those sleeping will not be disturbed. This can be a tricky concept to relate to a three year old who is still ready to play. It is important to remember that for some children, being quiet is neither natural nor easy and that we are asking a lot of them when we ask for their silence. Most, however, are understanding of the routine and understand that at this time of day a teacher will temper individual freedoms out of respect for the sleepy individuals who share the napping space.

At 2:30 any child who is awake will put away their softies, use the bathroom or have diaper checked, and proceed to the playground with one of the three inside floating teachers. There will be a teacher on the playground to welcome kids from nap and those that are arriving for the afternoon. Once the ratio exceeds 8:1, one of the three floating inside teachers will remain on the playground. Floating teachers will assist in the bathrooms and with taking kids out to playground once a group is ready.

Substitutes and new teachers will not be expected to have a nap room themselves but, eventually, the time will arrive. If you are here during naptime observe closely the routine, expectations, and interactions between each teacher and his/her respective naptime group. It is usually helpful to follow the same ritual that the kids are accustomed to during this part of the day.

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Now we will move on to the structured activities that are optional and do not require participation as a daily routine.

## CIRCLE TIME

Every day after the lunch bell rings, the morning inside teacher heads a circle time in the Pool Room while the lunch cleanup person supervises or assist when a large number of children are involved. The possibilities for this activity are unlimited, although a teacher will usually repeat an activity a number of times so that the children can build upon their experience from previous circles.

### COOKING

One morning every week, after we have moved the action outside, a teacher will bring groups of children inside for a cooking or food preparation activity.

A few considerations to keep in mind when approaching these structured activities:

- \* Consistency and Predictability – we do these things more or less the same way every time so that the children know what to expect. This gives them confidence and allows them to explore within recognized boundaries.
- \* Respect – this overarching tenet is essential, that we completely respect the child's way of thinking and way of being, just as we ask them to respect the people around them. Even though we must insist that they stay quiet at naptime, we also must remember that for some this is a challenge and inconvenience.
- \* Entertainment – a good teacher does not have to be entertaining. That being said, it greatly facilitates success in these structured activities when the children enjoy themselves.
- \* Inclusion – maintain a balance among the children involved in an activity. Some children have not yet learned how to engage themselves with others in a large or even small group. The teacher must take care to offer these kids ways in which they can choose to get involved and help them build the confidence to do so.

## LIST OF JOBS AND REQUIRED DUTIES

### **Potty Parties**

- There are two teachers assigned to each potty party. One main and one helper. The main is in charge of diapers, and the helper is in charge of toileting kiddos (except lunch, which is a bit different). You'll find a list of potty trainers near the water jug.

- Every child in a diaper **MUST** get checked. Don't let not knowing kids' names slow you down. Just ask the closest teacher.
  - The best way to do this is that the MAIN teacher is in charge of keeping a list, be it mental or paper, then the helper checking in with them once they have taken all their toilet trainers to change remaining diapers.
- Changing table cleaning procedure:
  - Spray table with soapy water, then wipe
  - Spray table with plain water, then wipe
  - Spray table with H2Orange2 or prepared bleach water, let sit, and wipe.

### **Morning Inside Person Duties**

There is a teacher assigned to morning inside preparation every day. This teacher is in charge of preparing potty party bags, setting up the house for nap, restocking the bathrooms, answering the phones and helping kiddos in the bathroom. Please refer to the inside duties list posted on the refrigerator in the vamanos house and also the chones house. Keep phone on you at all times.

### **LUNCH INSIDE PERSON**

During lunch there is an inside teacher. This job is marked as D on the schedule under Lunch/Dishes. This person is in charge of putting out mats in some of the rooms, answering the phone, accompanying children coming from the lunch area to the bathroom, and grabbing the lunch boxes from outside. Refer to the list posted on the fridge in the Chones house kitchen.

### **LUNCH CLEAN UP PERSON**

The lunch clean up person will have an LC on the schedule underneath Lunch/Dishes. This person has various responsibilities in the lunch area while the children eat. There is a list of responsibilities posted in the lunch area.

### **12:30 Inside People**

When there are **THREE** inside people:

- The 1st Person will walk inside with Dungeon. They will accompany them into the Hollywood Bano, then stay there to help with other rooms going potty until their designated time to leave.
- The 2nd Person will walk inside with Shark Room and stay with them through the potty process in Shark Bano. After that is complete, they will join the 1st teacher in Hollywood Bano to await further needs (most likely assisting Lava/Pool in the Broadway Bano).
- The 3rd Person will stay outside until the last room goes in (usually Bamboo). They will check the perimeter for any stragglers, then accompany Bamboo inside to assist in Hollywood Bano.

When only **TWO** inside people are available:

- The 1st Person's duties remain the same.
- The 2nd will go in last with Bamboo after checking the playground perimeter, then assist Shark and Lava/Pool if time allows.

### **PM Snack Person**

- Head inside at 3 to the chones kitchen. Prepare snack bucket with fruit from fridge and bananas/dried fruit from cupboard.
- Wipe down tables in lunch area that will be used for snack (usually 4 tables will do).
- Turn on fans (during summer months).
- Holler at the nearest teacher to spread the word that snack is ready.
- Begin snack no later than 315.

### **Afternoon Inside Clean Person**

Every afternoon, there will be one teacher that cleans and organizes both the Chones and Vamanos houses. This person will be expected to clean the bathrooms, the nap rooms, the kitchens, answer the phones, and accompany children to the bano. This person is welcome to listen to music inside from the stereo at a low volume (so as to hear the phone and any teachers from playground). Do not use ear buds during this time. Please refer to the list posted in both houses for the specific duties to be performed. Keep phone on you at all times.

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MORE SPECIFICALLY...

Now that we have covered some of the basics, we will move on to some more details concerning specific interactions with the kids. This section is intended to provide some more concrete examples of what happens on a daily basis at Habibi's and suggestions on communicating with a child and being part of his or her experience.

### THE VAMONOS CREW

The Vamonos kids are our youngest and their morning includes more of a routine than the rest of the kids. The routine allows them a more predictable environment in which they can explore and play without contending with as many older and faster children. These little guys often have a harder time saying goodbye to mom or dad and may need more affection as they get their day started. Some tender words, providing a cozy lap or leading them to some choices for playing can help them prepare for and become involved with the day.

Carolina brings the youngest of the Vamonos Crew inside in the morning and they begin their morning routine. She gets diapers ready and sets out several activities for the kids to choose from, which may involve activities such as coloring, gluing, play dough or painting.

Be mindful that the kids in this group have limited vocabularies and sometimes will express their feelings by pushing, screaming, scratching or biting. We urge and help them to use simple words and sentences to convey their emotions and needs to one another.

### THE ART OF STORYTELLING

Reading books and storytelling are windows for looking into what it is you think is important for kids to know. Whether you are reading a book like Frog and Toad or a Dr. Seuss book you emphasize what feels important. It is easy to breeze through a story reading word for word what the book says, but to read into it and interpret it, to talk about the details, the choices characters make, situations in which they find themselves, this is how we help our kids identify with things. A simple statement like: "If I was that guy I don't think I would be into that. What do y'all think?" can leave the door open for conversation and story telling and that kicks the door wide open to talk about any and everything under the sun.

Like a good comedian knows his or her audience, you need to know yours. If the audience is not ready to understand what it is you are trying to get across, then you are wasting time. However, at the same time, you want to avoid talking down to them. They understand and catch more than you realize! It is like fishing when you need to bait the hook and cast the line and you want that bait to be lively enough that you get

interested bites. Fish don't bite on bologna and if what you are talking about isn't easy to follow then there won't be any nibblers. For instance, one teacher reads Frog and Toad and can't stand these two characters. The teacher shares this with the kids and puts himself in Frog's shoes and identifies with Frog's decision to follow the list and then worry about how the list was blown away. The teacher knows the list is important to Frog but in the true reality of things the list is completely unnecessary for living. The idea that forward progress stops when the list is lost is preposterous and the teacher shares his feelings with the kids. Never be afraid to question the text and wonder out loud with your audience, "Do you really think he needs that list?" Some kids will agree and some will not but this is really a chance to get the conversational ball rolling. Even in this teacher's contempt for Frog (and really, this teacher cannot stand Frog and Toad), he realizes that there is still a good piece of fat for the fishes to nibble on and inside that fat is a hook and we are all for dangling the bait that leads teacher and kids down a path full of different and interesting questions and considerations.

Every story has its details and the details are the bonus points that drive a story home and keep it anchored in their minds so that next time you tell the story or bring up a recurring character the kids will say with a little smile and nod, "Oh, I know this one." Then you know they got it and say, "Yeah, but this time it might be a little different!" Even if you tell the same story it will come out different than the first time you cast it out and all the kids will be listening with new experiences and knowledge that lets them approach a familiar story in a new way. Remember the stories that you were told and think about why you remember them, the far away look in the eyes of the person that first told that story, and where all those cues took you in your mind. Your gestures and the volume of your voice can be simple things but they come into play in the way your words are coming across and whether they are even coming across at all. It can seem overwhelming at times when they cry out, "Make up a story!" and nothing comes to mind but is like a therapy session and the best thing you can do is just start talkin'!

### BEING PART OF CHILDREN'S FANTASY PLAY

One of the most important roles as a teacher is to be able to adapt to a child's world. In other words, relate to a child. This sets a foundation that facilitates teaching. If no relationship has been formed, a child will not be as likely to listen to what a teacher has to impart. Therefore, in order to get in with children a teacher must (at first) rid him/herself of the expectation that a child will connect at the teacher's level. A relationship of trust will form faster if a teacher can connect at the child's level. This means that the teacher should take part in and support a child's active imagination through that child's play. Children can easily find a place for you in their play. One teacher has found that many kids will create a powerful character through what

character they want the teacher to play. By encouraging the powerful roles they choose, the teacher shows a willingness to accept how the children need to see themselves or how they actually see themselves. A lot of this fantasy play might make sense of the larger “real” world around them. This real world is not the same real world that we adults experience. Adults often impose their real world onto children, which might be frustrating to those children. You might find yourself in play situations where you are trying to get somewhere and can’t be late and all of a sudden your puppy or kitten (the kids) runs away and you are in a struggling position to try and catch them. This situation puts the child in a fun and powerful role and you can play into it. If you are able to enter the child’s world and you are able to do it over a period of time the relationship that forms can lead to a smoother give and take (opposed to push and shove) dynamic between teacher and child. A push and shove would be a result of expecting them to come to your level and then, when you’re not looking, they sneak off and rebelliously be a child. A willingness to enter a child’s fantasy play is a great way to unconditionally value a child.

Thom has been engaged in lots of games of “zoo” lately. He will be the zookeeper and the kids will be whatever animals they choose (even if it’s a kitten hatching from an egg. This play will go on until there is too much shouting for his attention, someone gets hurt, or some adult/work responsibility pulls him away. Then there is too much noise he tells them he cannot hear each person’s idea because everyone is shouting and asks, “What should the group do about it? What ideas do you guys have?” He tells them to keep the idea in their head as he receives suggestions until one is accepted. He has found that changing pretend time into a story time makes a smooth transition. If someone gets hurt, the teacher can give a time out to the game and tend to the hurt child and let the kids know that this has to come first. Sometimes the kids are so into the game and want to get back to it that they take part in consoling the hurt child to help the situation. When it comes to other responsibilities like changing diapers or cleaning the playground the game must be stopped or paused and the teacher can let the kids know about the transition and that these chores must also be done. It shows a different reality to one’s role as a teacher. Try to let them know a few minutes in advance and then when the time comes you can tell them that you had fun and need to do this now but will be into starting a game again when you are able to and then leave it at that. Through this pretend play and relationship development a child’s boundaries can be discovered or ignited as well as the teacher’s in his/her willingness to love, respect and guide.

## TOYS FROM HOME AND SHARING

When a child brings a toy from home, make sure it is labeled with his or her name to eliminate confusion over ownership. The child who brings the toy has full control over it. Let's suppose Bernie brings a ball to school. He can put it in his cubby, ask a teacher to put it on a shelf, let his friend Dylan play with it, or he can just leave it somewhere. But if Dylan lets Cathy play with it and Bernie sees Cathy with the ball and doesn't like that he can ask for it to be returned. Cathy must honor the request. Cathy may not have realized it was Bernie's ball and she might get very upset and try to grab it. If Bernie yells "It's mine!" and runs towards Cathy the teacher can say "Tell her it's yours from home." These words are sacred. Many times the toy gets handed immediately back to its rightful owner, a curious phenomenon. Other times the child in possession of the toy will just stand there, obviously conflicted. At this point the teacher can prompt Bernie to repeat his words or can reinforce the words, "Bernie said that is his from home." This usually works. Sometimes it does not and you might say, "If you can't give the ball to Bernie then I'll help you give it back." If there is still no response the teacher can choose to remove the toy from the clutches of the child. Not a pretty picture sometimes. It may be helpful for the teacher to restate the situation, "That was Bernie's ball from home and he decides what happens to it." Remember to offer comfort and compassion and suggestions for cooperation.

At Habibi's we believe that it is a child's right to not share a toy or space if he or she is using it. If a group of kids has set up some soft blocks or plastic cars and chairs in the form of a pretend house or spaceship and are refusing to let other kids enter that space we respect that decision. We will not force the group to include a child for the sake of sharing or to avoid a tense situation. Rather, we will guide both parties in a conversation about the reasons for exclusion and other possible avenues that can include all who wish to be involved. Sometimes this works and in a few minutes everyone is cool. Sometimes it does not and the teacher may need to spend some time comforting a child and explaining why they cannot be involved in the group's play.

## TALKING AND LISTENING TO CHILDREN

We spend a lot of time talking and listening to our children. Our conversations can flow from talking about why the sky is blue to who makes the loudest farts. Behind all children's conversations rest their feelings. It is our job to help children deal with their feelings and not to judge or invalidate those expressions. When a child is talking to you listen attentively and quietly, acknowledging their feelings with a word or two, e.g. "I see...ah ha." Give their feeling a name, "That sounds frustrating...you sound angry." Give their wishes or needs compassion, "I wish I could bring your mama to you right now...what would you tell her if she was here?" All feelings can be accepted but

certain actions must be limited: “I can see you are mad at Fred but tell him with your words and not your fists.”

We employ many open-ended questions with our kids. Ask questions that encourage contemplation and hypothesis so many angles can be explored, e.g. “Why do you think the colors change? What would you do if you were on the boat? Where is this plane taking us?” Be comfortable in sharing your stories with the children. Let them know about your life, your pets, dreams, likes and dislikes. Describe things that you see: “You threw the ball way high into the air! You’re hauling away the sand...You hit George with the shovel... Do you see those rain clouds in the sky?” Refrain from judging or accusing; rather, describe and you will encourage a child’s problem-solving skills and promote higher-level thought processes. Encourage kids efforts over results. “That’s hard to do, yeah you are still trying!”

The children will be encouraged towards discovery and creation of their self (autonomy). First give them choices, “Do you want to wear blue or red underwear?” Show respect for a child’s struggles such as using scissors or pedaling a bike. Don’t be in a rush to answer questions and keep in mind a Socratic approach to learning. In other words, ask questions and let their answers open new doors, reinforce what they already know, and influence your own ideas about the situation or conversation.

### COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

The parent’s best window into their child’s day at HH is us, the teachers. Introduce yourselves to the parents. Whenever possible, talk to the parents about their children. Even small anecdotes can be valuable. Don’t load them with a lot of negative information they can’t do anything with but offer them honest and thoughtful insights to any questions or concerns they may express. Refer them to another teacher if necessary. Behavior issues should always be discussed with Andrew or Carolina first before bringing up to a parent. Keep it positive!

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Each conflict is opportunity for a dialogue. If you see a child hit another child describe what you see, “Lou, you walked up to Lenny and hit him in the face.” Often Lenny will be crying. Get down and comfort Lenny with your body and words. “That must have hurt. I’m sorry he hit you.” Then ask if Lenny needs to say anything to Lou. “Do you want to talk to Lou? Lou, Lenny wants to talk to you.” If Lenny is hesitant help him by saying “Lenny do you want Lou to hit you? If not, then you can tell him not to hit you.” Lou may respond with “Well, he called me stupid.” The teacher responds: “You don’t want to be called stupid?” “No!” says Lou. “Tell him not to call you stupid.” This

may continue for a while until both children have said all they need. Don't rush the interactions, they are important. Avoid prosecuting first- advocate for the victim first. "Oh man you got pushed down." Never let a child walk away from you or a dialogue until it is done. "Come back, Mary still wants to talk to you." We do not use time out at Habibi's but if a child is repeatedly hurting others, we may have that child stay next to a teacher for a short period of time. We all fall into habit of quick fixes and "stop that" interactions. The key is to review in your head each interaction you have, see where you can be more in tune with each child's feelings, motivations and point of view.

## HOW TO HANDLE COLD WEATHER

When the weather gets colder, there are a few things for all of us to remember:

- If we're inside in the morning, insist that socks be kept on! Help each child put their shoes into their cubby rather than a basket on the floor.
- When you're inside bathroom person, grab a sharpie and label as many coats, shoes, shirts, etc. as you possibly can.
- When it's time to help a whole bunch of kids put on a whole bunch of clothes before going outside, don't fret! This is a time for them to start doing some of this themselves. Help them by telling them what needs to be done to put this or that on their bodies. Loosen string/pull out tongues on shoes and many can do the rest.
- When we go out into cold weather, give the kids guidance in warming up. Initiate a game of tag or hide-and-seek. Build something that requires going here and there for parts. Open up the warmer spots of the playground.
- When coming in for nap, have them keep their socks on and shoes in cubbies or all together in nap room.
- When it is cold and/or dark in the late pm, bring the kids in to play, wrestle, do art, etc. Do not stay outside in the afternoon b/c of house cleaning.
- During the peak of winter, it will be too cold to play with water. This includes watery potions. Set up trucks, cars, wood blocks on tables, build cardboard blanket homes, dig, etc. Let me know if there are other materials we can get for use in colder weather.

- If you're supervising hand washing, aid in the child not getting wet.
- When the kiddos are inside, encourage them to take off coats and extra layers. This will help when they head out. After nap, make sure all the kids are appropriately bundled before you send them out.

### AT THE END OF THE DAY...

Well that just about takes care of things. No problem, huh? You're on your feet and ready to tackle any situation our kids bring, right? Remember, every day presents different challenges and rewards and the relationships that you will foster at Habibi's Hutch will expand your mind and heart just as much as those of the children. We are a community and rely on each other for help and support so always ask a more seasoned teacher or even a veteran Hutchster for advice or suggestions. Welcome to our school, the Hutchsters are happy to have you and we all look forward to what the day will bring!

### More on Words by Andrew Urbanus

Habibi's education is about context, much like real life. Words or deeds that are helpful and comforting in one situation may be invasive and destructive in another. For children at school, throwing sand in the air when no one is close by is a harmless activity. But the same action performed when people are within range can cause pained eyes and itchy heads. So... sometimes, throwing sand...OK. Sometimes, throwing sand...not OK.

It's the same with words. What is the context in which the words are being expressed? What are the feelings behind the words being expressed? What is the intention of those expressing the words? How are they interpreted by the other child or children? These are just some of the questions we ask in guiding your child through this maze called language and human interaction. We're here to help clarify meaning, to help tie together expressed feelings, to advocate for *all*. We talk a lot, adults and children, about what we say to and about each other, about what hurts our feelings or make us laugh.

Everyone has the right to not be called whatever it is they don't want to be called, whether it's poop head or dung beetle. They also have the right to test these "hidden in the sand" boundaries with each other and the teachers. How else will they truly

understand their own feelings and the feelings of others, if they don't try it out? I know that some of you have felt more than a little uneasy when your child greets me with a big, smiling "hey butthead Andrew" or "morning poopy dumbhead." Please don't be alarmed. First off, if I don't want them to call me something, I will tell them. "Wolfgang, I don't want to be called dorkface," and they won't call me that anymore. I know what you're thinking. "If you let my child call you a name then they're going to call grandma, or a neighbor, or the babysitter, or me, a name that none of us want to be called. You're right, they might. And if they do it's your job to work through your embarrassment and say out loud to your child and the 'victim':

"I don't know if grandma is OK with being called an old bag. Are you mom? She said 'no,' she's not OK with you calling her an old bag." Doing this firmly, clearly and empathetically, even with the very youngest ones will help you both see that each person and each situation is different. When you tell your child, "don't say stupid, it's not a nice word" as a blanket, from-this-day-forward rule, they simply can't apply it to every situation that will surely arise. Take each interaction separately, considering who's involved.

"My old college buddy says he doesn't want to be called a dorkface, he had enough of that at grad school."

"The bank teller says she doesn't want to be called a wiener face."

"I'm OK with you calling me a butthead, but not a buttass, it's just redundant, you know."

Remember that they're learning about lots of social rules that they had no part in creating. You shouldn't be bullied by your child so that you feel you can't be in charge. You are in charge, they need to know that. But be a boss who rules with understanding, sympathy and good humor. And remember, some grandmas really are old bags. Later, buttcrack.

*Kids can be fascinating and great for your overall health- engage and ENJOY!*

### What Do I Know by Kate Holton

As you probably know, one of the most popular activities at Habibi's (one of the many that makes us Habibi's) is potion making. It is a very complex process that involves mixing deadly baking soda, highly volatile food coloring, liquid Dawn (it's not just for dishes) and a variety of dirt (wet, dry, etc.). The combination of these elements can

create a variety of results-from the transfiguring to the edible to the positively lethal. This is a sensitive process, prone to the arguing of chemists if the potion has been misused or adjusted without the proper consult.

A few months ago, I noticed an interesting request from a few Habibi-trained chemists. The exchange would go something like this: "Kay-ate, I want red and blue and orange and green." My response, "Well, I think that will just make brown." The scientist would stare at me with that you-don't-know-what-the-bleep-you-are-talking-about look and I would inevitably cave on my three-color maximum rule and administer the desired colors. This went on for days. Finally one day I ended up saying something like, "Do you like brown. You are just going to make brown." The chemist responded, "No, I'm not. It makes pink." I think that I probably scoffed. I gave the colors and a few minutes later he came back holding his container high for my adult eyes. "See," he said, "It makes pink." His purple bucket was full of a beautiful dusty pink.

I don't know how or why. My experiments in the days that followed never had the same results. Maybe it was the way the colors had been diluted that week. For me, I soon learned...sometimes they know more than me. They see everything different, perhaps a little better... maybe a little more interesting, more bright. I feel humbled every day I spend at Habibi's. The delight my grown-up eyes just don't seem to find anymore in this crazy world of ours, I experience through them and I thank them for that. And just so you know, red and orange and blue and green doesn't always make brown, sometimes it makes pink.

### **Habibi's Hutch Traditions and Events**

Autumnfest and Springfest: A Friday in the Fall and the Spring when HH staff, kids and parents celebrate the season. Volunteer parents set up fun activities for the kids and many parents come to HH to enjoy the special day with their kids.

Halloween Fundraiser: A Saturday night near Halloween when parents, kids and friends come to HH dressed in costumes to enjoy a potluck dinner and shop at a silent auction.

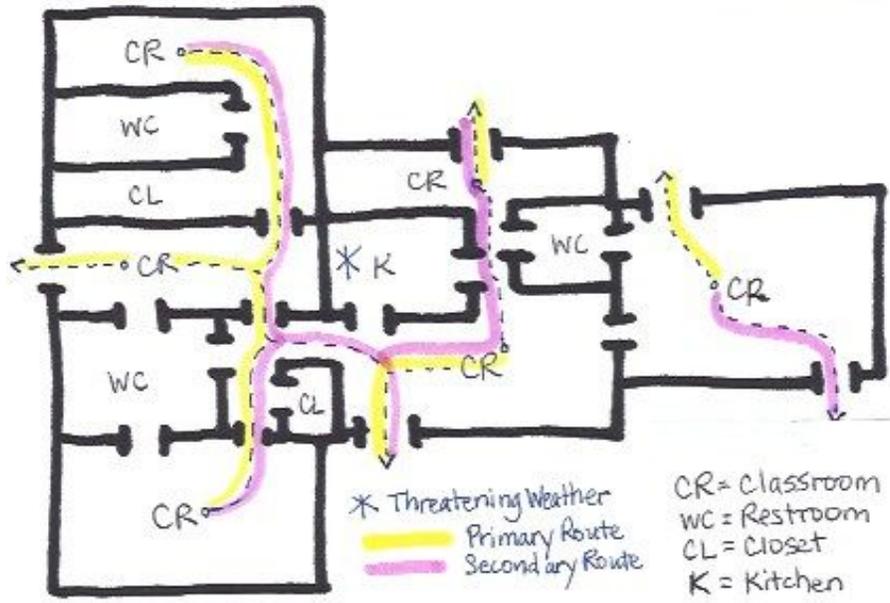
HH Graduation: A Friday or Saturday night in late May or early June when HH families come to the school to celebrate the graduation of HH kids. Graduate parents and the

teachers work together to create a book of photos of the graduates, and stories/drawings done by the graduates. There is a potluck dinner and a short video viewing along with a presentation of the graduates. Parents of the graduates usually present a gift to the school as well.

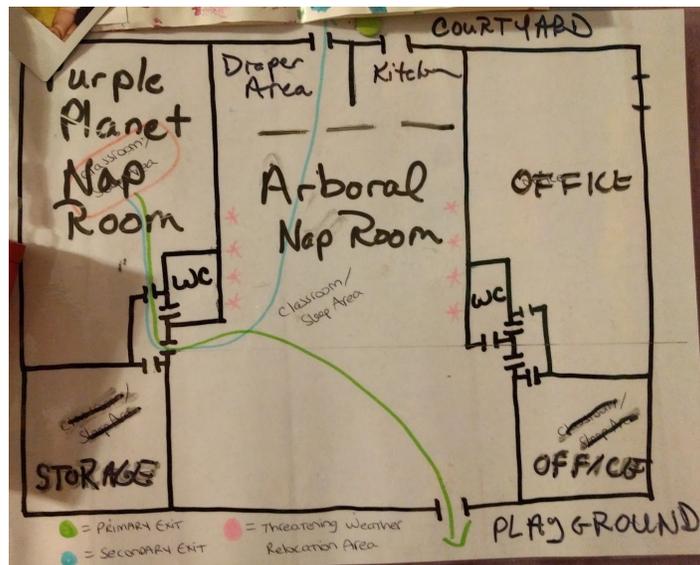
Christmas Bonus Collection: Each year before Christmas break we collect checks/cash to give to the teachers. This is VERY much appreciated by all of the staff.

#### EMERGENCY EVACUATION ROUTES

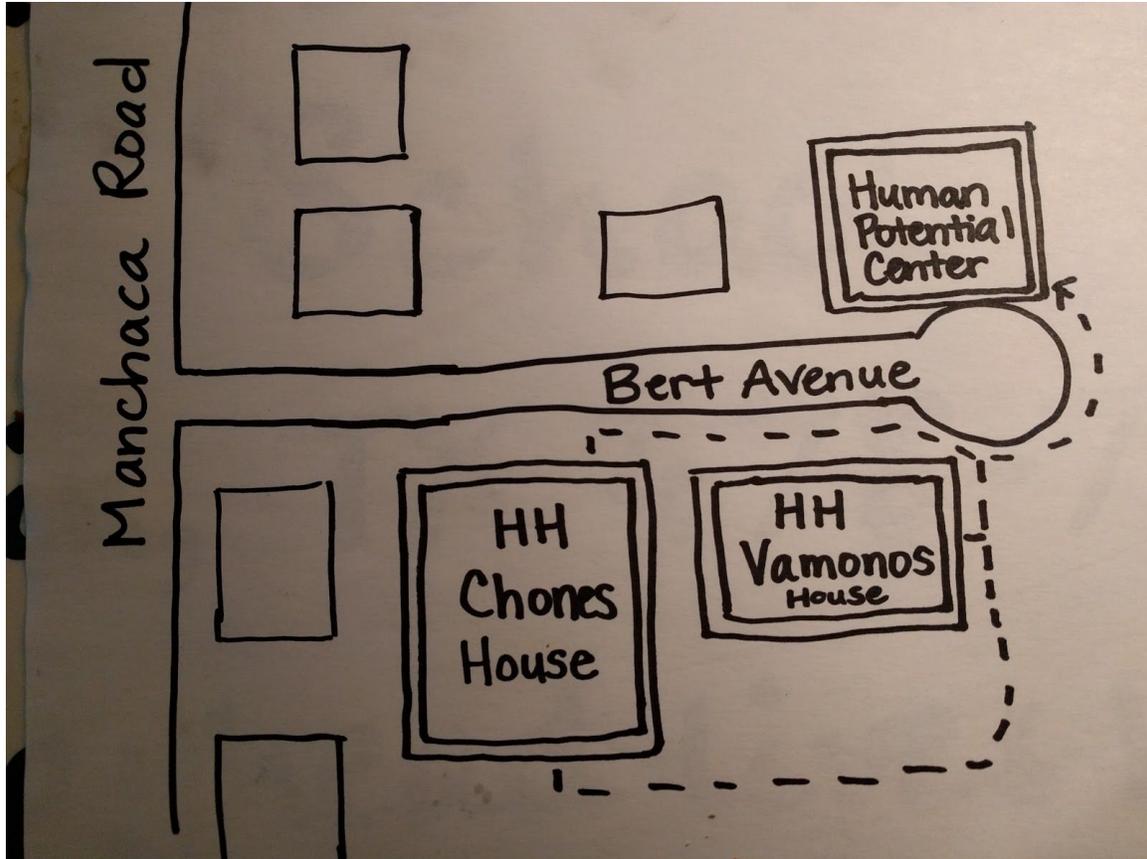
- Lead teachers will grab pink cards and gather their students, matching name to face, then proceed to the appropriate evacuation point. Once safe, they will do a name to face check again.
- If leaving the premises is necessary, assistant teachers should help the youngest children by holding hands or carrying, depending on the need.



Vamonos House



Route to Human Potential Center



## TEACHER TRAINING

Licensing requires each teacher to have 24 hours per year of professional development training. These hours need to be spread out throughout the year and can consist of our meetings, online courses, your current college credits in education (should you be taking any), and more!

We would like our teachers to complete 2 hours of online training by the end of each month. Follow the link below:

[http://extensiononline.tamu.edu/courses/child\\_care.php](http://extensiononline.tamu.edu/courses/child_care.php)

There are many free courses for you take, but should you be interested in a paid course, just forward your receipt to our email, and we will reimburse you.

Once a course is completed, you will get a digital certificate. Take a cropped screenshot and send us the \*.jpg to print out for your file or print yourself and turn in to the office.