

Children and Community that value arts and learning!



The Four Pillars

The Circle of Courage classroom management model is based on contemporary research, the heritage of early youth pioneers and First Nations philosophies of child care. This model is based on four core values, which are representative of four universal human needs:

Generosity: Character is cultivated by concern for others so that all can say: *I have a purpose for my life!*

Belonging: The universal longing for human bonds is cultivated by relationships of trust so that all can say: *I am loved!*

Mastery: The inborn thirst for learning is cultivated by learning to cope with the world so that all can say: *I can succeed!*

Independence: Free will is cultivated by responsibility so that all can say: *I have the power to make decisions!*

Circle of Courage

The purpose of using the Circle of Courage model in the daily student school experience is to promote student empowerment, caring and empathy. The Circle of Courage lowers the incidence of discipline problems that result from self-centred and anti-social behaviours. Research demonstrates that students report improved self-worth, self-esteem and are able to cope with problems that arise at school, at home and in the community. The Circle of Courage in the school enhances its overall asset-based approach to learning. All staff members are trained in the Circle of Courage philosophy and use it daily with students.

Democratic Discipline is another Pillar at Calgary Arts Academy. Democracy is an activity characterized by free and equal participation in government or in the decision-making processes of an organization or group. The concept of Democratic Discipline comes from a philosophy that everybody has a voice in establishing the rules of behaviour and the consequences for their maintenance.

Democratic Discipline

Democratic Discipline may be better understood as discipline strategies demonstrated in a democratic classroom. Students feel valued and trusted when they are provided with choices in classroom policies and learning procedures. This principle applies just as effectively to the establishment of behaviour and disciplinary measures. If discipline is handled with the same mutual respect as with other classroom activities, it can be a valuable and constructive part of a student's educational experience. In a democratic classroom the school encourages self-discipline, responsibility, decision-making and independence.

The system proposed by democratic discipline is the use of natural and logical consequences rather than reward and punishment. Students are responsible for their own behaviour and make decisions, and then are held accountable for the consequences of those decisions. Consequences are immediate, logical outcomes of student decisions rather than punishments that are far removed from the student's actions. Consequences are applied in a firm and friendly manner. The most effective consequences are those that have been formulated in advance with student input and collaboration. Parents and volunteers will be provided with orientation and training in the principles and language of Democratic Discipline on a regular basis. The expectation is that the principles of the program is practiced by all adults in contact with students.

Developmental Assets

Developmental Assets ensure students are aware of what is required for them to be successful during their school and individual careers. In 1990, Search Institute released a framework of 40 Developmental Assets, which identifies a set of skills, experiences, relationships, and behaviours that enable young people to develop into successful and contributing adults. As partners, students, school personnel, parents and community members, we can all help students plan for success at home, at school and in the community. This framework empowers each student to take calculated risks as they move forward.

Contract Learning

The final Pillar is Contract Learning. Learning contracts are both a teaching strategy and an assessment tool used to encourage *self-directed learning*. They are a negotiation between student/teacher and in some cases parents which help define what each parties responsibilities are. Learning contracts allow for shared responsibility of the planning and learning experiences. Students experience complete involvement in the learning process, beginning in Kindergarten. As students move through each year of schooling, there is increased opportunity for engagement. In the end, students are masters of self-directed learning.

