

## The Nature of Learning: Using Research to Inspire Practice

### Seven Principles of Learning

The learning sciences are a rich field of research that has helped us to better understand how we learn. Understanding the fundamentals of how we learn allows us to address more effectively the conditions in which successful learning can occur. Learning environments should be where: constructive, self-regulated learning is fostered, learning is sensitive to context, learning will often be collaborative. The ultimate goal of learning is the ability to apply meaningfully-learned knowledge and skills flexibly and creatively in different situations. This goes beyond acquiring mastery or routine expertise in a discipline. It involves the willingness and ability to change core competencies and continually expand the breadth and depth of one's expertise. It is therefore central to life-long learning. The **seven principles** guide the design of learning:

#### Learners at the Center

#### The social nature of learning

#### Emotions are integral to learning

#### Recognizing individual differences

#### Stretching all students

#### Assessment for Learning

#### Building horizontal connections



#### NLPS Goals (Achievement Contract 2014)

- Goals: Meet each student's unique needs
- The continuous improvement of instruction and assessment



## Living Unit

**"Each child is unique, not only capable of learning but also capable of succeeding"**

**- Robert John Meehan**

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Home of the Panthers



## Living Unit



I am Responsible  
I am Respectful

**The Living Unit develops social interaction in a small group setting. Students learn ways to participate in a group by developing critical foundation skills such as:**

- \*using your eyes to figure out thoughts and feelings.
- \* shared attention to the group plan.
- \* being purposeful in this space (keep your body in the group, not too close, not too far).
- \* whole body listening (lets others know we are thinking about them and the plan).
- \*language that develops peer to peer and child to teacher relationships (giving and accepting suggestions, giving compliments, asking questions to get information or for clarification when confused, offering turns, responding to initiations by peers, giving information, maintaining the topic of conversation).
- \*executive functioning in a group (the get ready, do, done model for planning, executing and evaluating what we do in a group).

**The program is based in part on the social thinking concepts developed by Michelle Garcia Winner ([www.socialthinking.com](http://www.socialthinking.com)), the executive functioning strategies developed by Sarah Ward and Kristen Jakobsen . ([www.cognitiveconnections.com](http://www.cognitiveconnections.com)) and the integrated play group strategies developed by Pamela Wolfberg. (<http://wolfberg.com>)**



Some students do not benefit from the opportunities for play that come naturally to typical peers even with being provided with the place, time, props, and peers to access play.

Some researchers have examined the power of positive peer relations. For example, 10 positive exchanges a day becomes 10,950 over a 3 year period for typical students who then reap the benefits of a sense of belonging, self-concept, language development, a willingness to explore, and better school achievement.

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights puts play as a human right, “The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation.”

The Living Unit provides play as a path to inclusion as part of its’ curriculum. Literacy, numeracy, and written skills are also interwoven throughout the program.