



The Garden

Montessori School

Where Learning Comes to Life

HANDBOOK

2011 - 2012

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gardenmontessori.com

Mission statement.....	3
History of the school	3
Organization and administration	3
Admission	3
Refunds	4
Late fees and other charges.....	4
Arrival / dismissal procedure	5
Arrival / dismissal schedule	6
Absences / attendance	6
Field trips	6
Delays and closings	6
Modified schedule.....	7
In-service days.....	7
Health policy	7
Allergies	8
Medical emergencies.....	8
Messages	8
Announcements.....	8
Written communications	8
The peace rose.....	9
Self discipline.....	9
Grievance or conflict resolution	9
Conferences	9
Classroom visits	10
Spanish.....	11
Clothing.....	11
Extra clothing	11
Slippers.....	12
Life celebrations.....	12
Portfolios & graduation	12
Lunches	13
Snacks	13
Toys	13
Orientation	14
Parent education.....	14
Dr. Maria montessori	15
The montessori philosophy.....	15
Goals and objectives	16
The montessori primary curriculum	16

General Information

MISSION STATEMENT

The Garden Montessori School values and encourages the development of the child's sense of independence, self-discipline and confidence in a safe, supportive, culturally and academically diverse environment as guided by the Montessori philosophy. Garden Montessori is a child-centered, parent-inclusive school that provides a stimulating environment for Directresses and staff to respond to children's interests using a variety of Montessori methods. Garden Montessori respects children's differences and encourages them to make appropriate choices thereby becoming self-directed in their learning in order to develop as individuals and as members of their community.

HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL

Recognizing the need and desire for a Montessori pre-school in the greater Cranberry area, Sandra Smith founded The Garden Montessori School in June of 1999. The Garden provides a quality Montessori pre-school experience to residents in Cranberry Township, Wexford, Pine Township, Marshall Township, Adams, Mars, Gibsonia and Zelienople. In September 1999 the Garden began operations in one classroom at the Family Retreat Center in Marshall Township with enrollment of twenty-four students. In 2001 an afternoon session was added, increasing the enrollment to thirty-eight. The Garden relocated the school in August 2005 to a new facility in Cranberry Township with two classrooms and enough space for a Spanish classroom and support facilities. A third classroom opened in September 2009. Total enrollment has grown to approximately 60 children.

ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

The Garden Montessori School is organized as a limited liability company, and is licensed by the Department of Education of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. All administrative and policy decisions at The Garden are the responsibility of the Administrator and are in accordance with maintaining the integrity of the Montessori Philosophy.

ADMISSION

Information about The Garden is available to any interested persons upon request. Classroom observations may be scheduled by contacting the school office. Parents of prospective students are required to complete an Application for Admission form, which must be accompanied by a non-refundable application fee of \$50.00.

Before a child is accepted, he or she will have the opportunity to visit the classroom after school hours for an informal tour. This visit serves three purposes: first, the child will have the opportunity to meet the teacher, view the classroom and work with Montessori learning material; second, the teacher will be able to evaluate the child's level of readiness; and finally, the parent(s) will have the opportunity to see the interaction between the teacher and the child. While we do enroll older children who have had previous Montessori experience, we prefer to accept children who will be between the ages of 2 years 10 months and 3 years 6 months by September 1 of the school year, or at the time of enrollment.

The School will notify Parents by mail of their child's acceptance. A non-refundable \$200.00 enrollment deposit and completed contract is required within ten working days of acceptance to hold the child's place for the next term. This deposit is applied to tuition.

The Garden Montessori School accepts students, faculty and staff regardless of race, national origin or religious beliefs. A racial and ethnic mixture is considered important to the health of the school and to the full social development of the child.

The Garden Montessori School considers the records of all students to be confidential information and will release said records to another school and/or appropriate agency only upon the signed written request of the Student's parents or guardians and only after all accounts due are paid in full.

REFUNDS

In compliance with Pennsylvania Department of Education's Rules and Regulations Governing Private Academic Schools, the following is the Garden's refund policy for all payment plans.

- A school year is divided into two terms
 - Fall term is from the first day of class in September through the last day of class in December according to the school calendar
 - Winter term is from the first day of school in January through the last day of school in May according to the school calendar.
- Any student who withdraws, or is requested to withdraw during a term, on or after the first day of school, shall not receive a refund of the tuition paid for that term.
 - Any tuition paid for future terms, however, shall be refunded.
- Any student who withdraws or is requested to withdraw within less than 30 days prior to the beginning of a term shall be entitled to a 75% refund of any tuition fees paid for that term – excluding the non-refundable \$200 enrollment deposit.
- Any student who withdraws or is requested to withdraw more than 30 days prior to the beginning of a term shall be entitled to a 100% refund of any tuition fees paid for that term – excluding the non-refundable \$200 enrollment deposit.

The Garden has a long standing policy of refunding a prorated portion of tuition – excluding the non-refundable \$200 enrollment deposit – if and when a suitable replacement is fully enrolled.

LATE FEES AND OTHER CHARGES

The Garden relies on prompt tuition payment for the majority of operating revenues. Therefore the Garden has adopted the following financial policies:

- all accounts must be kept current for the Student to remain in school
- the School will assess Tuition paid after the due date a \$25.00 (twenty five dollar) late charge and 1.5% (APR 18%) interest per month after the last day of the month due and monthly for all or any portion of a month thereafter
- an account 30 days or more in arrears may result in suspension of the Student
- in the event of Suspension of the Student the amount in arrears and accrued interest is still considered due to the School until satisfactory settlement of the account is made

- there is a \$25.00 (twenty five dollar) cash charge for checks returned by the School's bank for any reason and more than 1 (one) returned check will result in a C.O.D. status
- Student academic records are not released until the Students account is paid in full including all tuition, fees, and penalties, and all School property has been returned in good condition.

General Policies and Procedures _____

ARRIVAL / DISMISSAL PROCEDURE

Children may be dropped off and picked up according to the schedule listed below. Arrivals and dismissals are expected to be as prompt as possible. Upon arrival the Directress or an Assistant will come to your car to get your child and escort him/her into the school. This allows for an easier separation and less hectic arrival process. It is required that all children hold the hand of the adult escorting them from the car line for safety reasons.

The children prepare for class by hanging their coats, changing into their slippers and washing their hands before entering the classroom, therefore we would like to emphasize the importance of your child's timely arrival at school. Children enjoy having a consistent beginning, middle and ending routine to their days. Late arrivals deprive your child of this. Noisy and awkward late arrivals break the classroom rhythm and concentration. When you must arrive late please notify the school so we are prepared to meet your child at the door.

The staff has the responsibility to prepare the classroom for the Kindergarten session as well as the end of day cleaning. Late pickups greatly interfere with this process and are not acceptable other than extreme cases of emergency. It is also very disconcerting to the child when she is left waiting.

Dismissal procedures are as follows:

- **No cell phone use is permitted** from the building corner through pickup or drop-off.
- Promptly pick-up your child at the scheduled time. Please pull up to the pick-up point and wait while a staff member assists your child into the car. This produces a more orderly and safe dismissal.
- **Insurance regulations do not permit the staff to buckle the children into their car seats.** When you arrive at the pick up point, place your car in park and engage the emergency brake. If you have more than one child and need extra time buckling please put the children in the car and **pull around to the lined, marked spaces in the rear of the building** to secure them.
- No child will be dismissed to anyone whom you have not authorized in writing on the Emergency Contact form. You may add or delete names as needed. If changes occur while the child is in school, please call the school with this information. If necessary, leave a message on the answering machine as messages are checked each day before dismissal.
- Special dismissal instructions which differ from the child's usual routine must be put in writing with all information clearly specified. For example, children who are leaving school to visit another Garden student's home must have permission and instructions given in writing by a parent or caregiver.

- In order to make the dismissal process as efficient as possible please pull up as far as possible to allow **three** cars to be loaded in line in front of the school. If you must speak to the Teacher pull up and to the side so that the car line can continue to move.

ARRIVAL / DISMISSAL SCHEDULE

	Arrival	Dismissal	Days
Regular Program	8:30 – 8:40	11:30 – 11:40	M & F
Pre-K4 Program	8:30 – 8:40	2:00 – 2:10	T, W, Th
	8:30 – 8:40	11:30-11:40	M & F
Kindergarten	8:80 – 8:40	3:00 -3:10	T, W, Th
	8:80 – 8:40	11:30 – 11:40	M & F

ABSENCES / ATTENDANCE

Please notify the school by 8:30 the first day of any absence. It is the policy of the school that a child attend school every day that the school is in session, unless the child has a valid reason for absence.

FIELD TRIPS

During the course of the year, the Garden Kindergarten children will take field trips to enrich their learning experience. For safety and logistical reasons we try to have special guests and programs come to the school for the three and four year old children rather than take them out on a field trip, except on a rare occasion. Field trips are a privilege and therefore the children are expected to use appropriate respectful behavior. These expectations are clearly discussed with the children prior to each trip. Children who are unable to behave appropriately may not be invited to subsequent trips. All trips are well chaperoned by parents and/or teachers. Parents who participate by driving or chaperoning are responsible for helping to supervise and control their group of assigned children. All field trips will be announced in advance and all children must have a signed permission form on file at the school prior to participation in each trip. Parents are encouraged to participate by taking turns driving. Any parent who will be driving the Garden children must have a copy of their driver's license and current insurance information on file at the school prior to the field trip.

Since parent chaperones keep an eye on a number of young children in their group, we ask that **OTHER ARRANGEMENTS BE MADE FOR SIBLINGS** below preschool age and they **NOT** accompany parent chaperones.

DELAYS AND CLOSINGS

The Garden determines its own schedule for school closings or delays (i.e. bad weather or snow days). Parents need to refer to the website or watch the local television stations for the Garden's listing for a **MODIFIED SCHEDULE** or a closing.

MODIFIED SCHEDULE

Regular Program: **10:30-12:30**

Pre-K4 Children: Monday and Friday: **10:30-12:30**

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: **10:30-2:00**

Kindergarten Children: Monday and Friday: **10:30-12:30**

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: **10:30-3:00**

IN-SERVICE DAYS

In-service days are meant to serve as workdays for our teaching staff, although students will not attend class. The teachers may use In-Service days in such ways as visiting other schools, attending educational conferences or seminars, or preparing learning / classroom materials.

HEALTH POLICY

The Garden is required by law to keep immunization records on file for each student. Please have your physician complete and return the immunization form at least two weeks prior to the first day your child attends school. Children are required by the state to have a medical and dental exam during the "kindergarten" year. Children who will be five years old on or before January 31 will receive the necessary forms and instructions well in advance.

The following is a list of symptoms to guide you in deciding whether your child should be sent to school. **DO NOT SEND YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL ON DAYS WHEN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS ARE PRESENT:**

- **FEVER** (temperature over 98.6) - please keep the child home until the temperature has been normal for 24 hours without a fever reducer.
- **RASH** - keep the child home until the rash is gone or has been identified by your doctor as non-contagious.
- **COUGH**- any child with a severe cough should be kept at home.
- **HEAVY NASAL DISCHARGE**
- **DIARRHEA** or other intestinal upsets – please keep the child home until the diarrhea has been gone for 24 hours
- **VOMITING** or severe nausea – please keep the child home until the vomiting has been gone for 24 hours
- **SORE THROAT**
- **COLD SYMPTOMS** - keep a child with a "fresh" cold home 48 to 72 hours (2 to 3 days), and until the child is showing improvement.
- **CONJUNCTIVITIS** – red, blood shot and crusty eyes. The child will not be allowed to attend school until he/she has had antibiotic eye drop treatment for a **MINIMUM OF 24 HOURS**.
- **LACK OF SLEEP**- if your child has had insufficient or interrupted sleep.

Any child with a contagious illness **SHOULD NOT** be sent to school until your doctor can tell you that the contagious period is past. Remember that not only is it unfair to expose other children and staff unnecessarily, but often the sick child's resistance is low, and so could easily contract another infection. Also, any child returning to school after an illness should be able to participate in outdoor activities as this is an intrinsic part of The Garden's regular program.

School personnel will administer medication only if requested to do so in writing by the parent or caregiver. Parents should request the special form available in the office. Specify in writing what the medication is and what time the medication should be given, and the dosage. The container should be child-proof and clearly marked with the child's name, name of medication, dosage, and schedule. Medication should be given to the adult who meets your child at the door. **DO NOT SEND MEDICATION IN COAT POCKETS OR SCHOOL LUNCH BAGS.**

The Garden Montessori School does not apply any medication to a wound other than water to wash it, apply ice, or a Band-Aid. Many children react unexpectedly to seemingly benign medical compounds such as hydrogen peroxide, calamine, sunscreen, lotions, etc.

ALLERGIES

If your child has any allergies that would require an epi-pen to be on hand, inform the staff prior to the beginning of school on the Emergency Information form. Use of an epi-pen requires a written directive as with any other medication. If your child is prone to other allergic reactions you may send in Benadryl or appropriate medication for the staff to administer. You must fill out the medical form indicating dosing information and provide the appropriate dosing spoon.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In the event of an accident or sudden onset of illness, the school will not hesitate to seek proper care for a child. The child's individual emergency instructions on file in the school office (copies of which are taken on field trips) are consulted immediately, and the parent or guardian is called. The consent statement that the parent or guardian has signed will accompany the child in the event that hospital treatment is necessary, so that treatment can be administered immediately in the absence of the parent or guardian. *IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU KEEP THE EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION ON FILE IN THE SCHOOL OFFICE UP-TO-DATE.*

MESSAGES

The school has an answering machine to accommodate phone calls when no one is in the office. This machine is frequently checked, so please feel free to leave messages regarding absences, dismissal, etc.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

To alert you of any changes in the regular school schedule or inform you of important matters, the school will send out an email or message sheet.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

To minimize misunderstandings or forgetfulness, the school requests that all messages and other information to the staff be sent via email or put in writing by a parent or caregiver, be dated and signed, and give specific, clear information as needed. The exception to this policy is messages called in to the school, which are transcribed by a staff member. Please do not expect your child to relay a verbal message.

Communication with the teacher regarding your child is extremely important. Please convey any pertinent information via email or phone call regarding a home situation; for example an illness, death in the family,

or an upset in your normal routine, so the teachers are aware of any distress or behavioral change. It is the philosophy of the school to work hand in hand with parents during any difficult situation. Clear communication is vital this process and all issues are held in the strictest confidence.

THE PEACE ROSE

Building and maintaining a peaceful classroom environment is crucial to the child's developing sense of respect and community. The Garden Montessori School provides a safe and secure atmosphere for optimum learning opportunities. We use a classroom technique implementing the Peace Rose for conflict resolutions. In the event of conflict, the children involved can go to the Peace Rose and offer it back and forth while verbalizing and expressing their feelings, thoughts, opinions and apologies if necessary. The lessons given to the children involve the Directress or the Assistant to the extent of providing appropriate language for conflict resolution. This technique is very successful, allowing the children to resolve their own conflicts and further increasing their sense of independence, self esteem and respect.

SELF DISCIPLINE

The Montessori Program nurtures self-discipline, which develops over a period of many years. The basis of discipline is respect: respect for oneself, for others, and for the environment. The adults and children in the prepared environment set limits for behavior based on the group's need for a safe and mutually respectful community.

If a student has difficulty following the rules of the community, the response will be age appropriate. Personal attention, distraction, substitution and/or removal from the situation are typical approaches. Many instances resolve themselves as the student, within the bounds of safety and common sense, experiences the logical consequences of his/her actions (i.e., wiping up after throwing a can of paint on the floor). If the student disregards the rules of the classroom community, the Teacher seeks the underlying cause in order to help the student understand the inappropriateness of his/her actions and to find a constructive alternative. If such behavior occurs repeatedly, the Teacher may request the Administrator or another Teacher to observe and offer consultation before the parents are contacted for their support and cooperation.

GRIEVANCE OR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- 1.) If you have a question regarding your child, ask his/her Teacher. Teachers are your first resource to answer your questions and resolve your difficulties.
- 2.) If the Teacher is unable to resolve the question, please address your question to the Administrator.

If a resolution cannot be reached in the above two steps we will set up an appointment with the Teacher, Administrator and parents to discuss the situation with the goal of working together to resolve a situation. We desire to do the very best for your child. When we handle areas of concern quickly and with care, we achieve our goals for your child without disruption.

CONFERENCES

Open communication with your child's teacher is highly desirable. You may request a conference at any time by telephoning the school. You can generally reach the staff at school during the afternoon. We will

schedule formal conferences in January. We will contact the parents of new children during the first couple of weeks of school to discuss their adjustment. The teacher will contact you with any concerns that require immediate discussion.

CLASSROOM VISITS

A minimum of at least one parent is required to visit the school and spend time in their child's classroom per year. Parent visits will be scheduled on Saturday mornings rather than during the school week. Information and scheduling will be sent out during the course of the year.

New parents will be offered the opportunity for an "observation peek" through the observation window on the door to the classroom in mid to late October. Classroom observations can also be arranged if there is a specific concern.

We do not allow in-class observations for the first six weeks of school or until the class has "normalized" in Montessori parlance. We ask you to keep your observation confidential and discuss any questions you may have with the Teacher later that day, preferably by phone. You will be given a written guide with hints for observing both the classroom and your child.. It is important that you observe for one-half hour or longer in order to see your child's work cycles, concentration level, socialization patterns, and choice of activities. The best time to observe is at the beginning of the session, as this is often the most active work period. Your conversation with the Teacher, after your observation period, is most important so you can gain insight into the content of your observation.

Observation Guidelines

- The goal of the observation is for you to see your child during a typical and natural day
- When observing through the classroom door window, please move into the lunch room if your child needs to leave the classroom to use the bathroom
- Get an overview of the room by scanning all areas and then observe individual work.

The Montessori environment is frequently referred to as an "ocean of activity." Activity is indeed the foundation of the Montessori approach: muscles and mind function freely and together. Teachers take great care when they design the classroom environment.

Notice how children interact with each other. Some prefer to work alone while others work in small groups. Children are free to move from one area to another, but need to take responsibility for completing the work they choose.

Observe the adults. Note the language they use with the children. Note the general hum and then pick out individual conversations and focus on social skills being developed by the participants. Are the children using polite forms of communication? Recognize that you may not be able to sort out all the dimensions of the classroom during any given visit. Each visit clarifies your impressions and gives you more insight into how the Montessori Method works.

SPANISH

The children attend Spanish class every Wednesday or Thursday in small groups of six or seven children at a time. Parents are asked to help their child make a "Spanish Box" to be kept at home. You can use a large shoebox and allow your child to use his/her imagination to decorate it. The children will be receiving an item every week to add to their box. These items are a tangible vocabulary list, which will enable the child to practice Spanish independently. Each object will be labeled with the correct phonetic pronunciation to help parents practice with their child if desired.

At the end of each school year, we celebrate "Children's Day". It is tradition that the Kindergarten children make the piñatas for the celebration. All children join in the festivities as they sing songs, break the piñatas, and play various Spanish games they have learned throughout the year.

CLOTHING

Children do a variety of activities at school, including polishing, painting, washing, dancing, tumbling, gluing, and cooking. Clothing should allow freedom to engage in any and all activities. **Please do not allow your child to wear clothes that cannot get wet or dirty.** We usually go outside to play in all weather, so please dress your child in appropriate outer garments. The outside grass and fields can be very muddy even though it is not raining.

Be sure to label coats, shoes and other items with your child's name. Please attach mittens - not gloves- to the coat sleeves during cold weather. School clothing should be suited to the weather, washable and designed for the child's own needs in the bathroom. Dress your child in clean, comfortable, easy-to-manipulate clothing. Although the teacher will be there to help as needed, your child will gain great satisfaction and independence if he or she is able to dress or undress him/herself as necessary for trips to the restroom, outdoor play and dismissal.

- Appropriate outdoor clothing and footwear to current weather conditions is necessary since outdoor activities are scheduled for most days except for rain and extreme cold.
- For those children who will be working on potty training, please notify the school so special arrangements can be made. Make sure to send sufficient training pants replacements or "pull-ups".

EXTRA CLOTHING

The school has extra clothing of all sizes and garments on hand in case of water accidents, spills etc. This eliminates the need for sending extra clothing to school, borrowing other children's clothing, and having appropriate clothing for all weather conditions. If your child has an accident his/her clothes will be sent home in a plastic bag labeled with the description of the type of accident. Please launder the school clothes and return them the next day. We will be counting on having this supply so please be diligent in returning any borrowed clothes.

Following are some guidelines for choosing clothing your child wears to school daily:

- Choose clothing that is easy to manipulate for trips to the bathroom, and that is comfortable and suitable for classroom and outside play activities.
- Children will feel pride and independence if they can take off and put on their own shoes. Slip-ons are a good choice, as are sneakers with a Velcro fastening for younger children. (Older children who have

learned to tie laces may wear laced shoes.) Remember that children will be playing outside most days and fancy dress shoes can be slippery and become soiled so should not be worn.

SLIPPERS

The children wear slippers in the classroom for several reasons. The Montessori Method recognizes the child's need for quiet and order in the classroom to allow him or her greatest opportunity for concentrated work. The opportunity to take off and put on shoes increases their level of independence and dressing skills. Slippers also eliminate a higher noise level in the classroom. The children use mats for a great deal of floor work and slippers help to maintain the cleanliness of the environment, alleviating mud and dirt being tracked into the classroom with street shoes.

We ask you to provide slippers to be kept at school. Please encourage your child to choose simple and comfortable ones, **Ballet or Isotoner-type slippers are preferred as they are easier to wear and store.** Slippers with large character heads are **not appropriate** because children are often uncomfortable if they are trying to sit with their feet directly under their bottom. Clog or backless type slippers tend to fall off frequently and are a distraction. Please mark the child's name on both slippers.

LIFE CELEBRATIONS

Since we frequently have children with birthdays in the summer months, we've adopted an alternative way to celebrate every child.

We send out a calendar at the beginning of the year for you to come in for your child's Life Celebration Day (LCD) to share something about each year of his/her life with the rest of the class.

A child's birthday is commemorated in the classroom in the following way: You may prepare a book showing photos of significant events such as their birth, favorite activities or hobbies, a new sibling, etc. For example: "_____ was born on _____ in _____. When he or she was six months old, we moved to _____. When she was one year old, she started walking..."

Please keep in mind that the younger children cannot sit for long periods so the length should be kept to **10 minutes or less.** For this reason we recommend no more than two pictures or mementos from each year. The book can be added to as the child gets older.

We recommended that the parent reads the book to the class. The rest of the children will be practicing the virtues of respect, kindness and self discipline. They will be given the opportunity to ask you a specific question about your child such as "how old was she when she learned to feed herself?"

The LCD provides us all with an insight into your child's life and sharing differences in traditions, culture and family. Since we have scheduled these special days in advance specifically for your child, we are unable to change the date or reschedule. You may change dates with another family, however. Please let us know at least 2 weeks in advance so we may prepare appropriately.

PORTFOLIOS & GRADUATION

The Kindergarten year in Montessori is the culmination of the child's previous two years of work. This is the time the children not only aspire to new heights but also when they begin to unfold as young leaders, beginning readers and budding mathematicians. Withdrawal from the program at this point can be very

upsetting to the child as they miss the most fruitful part of the Montessori experience. Besides reinforcing their academic knowledge, the Kindergarten year enhances their self esteem and develops their self confidence.

The Graduation ceremony recognizes and celebrates those children who have completed the Kindergarten year. The school keeps a sample of each child's work throughout their three year education for inclusion in a portfolio of work which is presented at Graduation. Each portfolio includes pictures of the child during various activities and a progression work samples which demonstrate a mastery of work in all areas of the classroom.

During the final months of the Kindergarten year, the child will help to prepare the portfolio's cover art. If a child is withdrawn early and does not complete the Montessori three year cycle by attending a full Kindergarten year, they will not receive a completed portfolio. They will, however, be given their work samples. Parents will be emailed photographs during the Kindergarten year to print and include in their child's portfolio. There will be 2 or 3 meetings throughout the year to help with portfolio production.

LUNCHES

The Kindergarten and PreK-4 students will have lunch at school Tuesday through Thursday. Setting the table, meal preparation and exercises of grace and courtesy are highly valued in the Montessori curriculum. The children will also be learning respect for the environment, conservation and waste. We ask that you pack a cloth placemat and napkin in your child's lunch daily, and provide a healthy and balanced meal preferably with recyclable and reusable containers. So that you can monitor what your child is and is not eating any uneaten food is sent home (other than liquids, yogurts, etc.) Please do not send extra treats because the children are not allowed to trade food.

- Label your child's lunch box and thermos with his/her name.
- Have your child help prepare his/her lunch.
- If your child has dietary restrictions and/or food allergies, please list them for the teacher's information.

SNACKS

Parents are asked no more than three times a year to take turns bringing in a nutritious snack. A monthly snack calendar will be sent home in advance. Please have the snack **ready to serve** as the staff does not have time to wash and cut fruit or cheese etc.. Lessons in grace and courtesy, food preparation, serving, pouring, table setting and cleaning up are all presented to the children so that they can participate in snack independently. Individually wrapped snacks such as puddings and crackers with spreads are too difficult for the younger children to open.

Please refer to the snack preparation guidelines for specific directions, ingredients and quantities.

TOYS

Because toys are often a distraction and a source of conflict, we request that the student not bring toys to school. Your child may bring a favorite book or other educational item, such as a seashell collection, to share with the class during group time.

ORIENTATION

The orientation process for new students in the fall begins on a gradual schedule so that the children have a comfortable and slow adjustment to their new school environment. This allows the children time to learn the ground rules of the class and to expand their choices of work daily. Orientation also ensures that the class as a whole adjusts positively. All students are provided with an individual attendance schedule.

Parent Participation

Montessori schools rely upon strong parental involvement. Dr. Maria Montessori herself, from the inception of her "Children's Houses," insisted that parents become involved with the education process. Parental involvement in the school models a sense of community and cooperation to the children. It is also the role of the parent to reinforce the Montessori philosophy at home to provide continuity and consistency for the child.

Parent Volunteers are asked to help with a variety of needs and projects throughout the year. One person is designated to act as a liaison with the administration and will then communicate the needs to the appropriate parent group; i.e. playground, field trips, volunteers etc. A form will be sent home at the beginning of the school year requesting parental participation.

Parents are encouraged and welcomed to participate in the classroom as well as any extra projects such as cooking, quilting, preparation of Thanksgiving baking or other holiday events, field trips, preparing a garden bed, etc. Parents who have a talent, career, hobby or tradition that they think would be interesting to the children are encouraged to make arrangements with the staff to set up a time to share this information. Circle time will be used to focus on various topics throughout the year and we would welcome any educational, cultural or culinary information, or artifacts to share with the children. A calendar will be distributed in advance to allow for preparation.

Parents will be invited to visit the classroom during the school year. This is an opportunity to observe your child's day first hand. Scheduling options and guidelines will be sent in advance.

PARENT EDUCATION

The Montessori philosophy of education encompasses all aspects of the development of your child. A clear understanding of the Montessori Method and a consistency between school and home environments will further aid the children in the development of independence, self esteem, respect and learning.

The Garden has a parent library which includes books and pamphlets on the Montessori Method of education. These items can be borrowed by contacting the school office.

Parent Education events will be scheduled periodically. We encourage you to attend all Parent Education events and to make use of the Montessori literature in our library. A better understanding of the Montessori philosophy will make it possible for you to reinforce in the home what your child learns in school.

The Montessori Method of Early Childhood Education

DR. MARIA MONTESSORI

Maria Montessori was born in 1870 into an upper-class Italian family. She chose to study medicine, and despite many obstacles, was admitted to the all-male medical school. In 1896, Montessori became Italy's first female physician. Her interests also included studies of anthropology, philosophy, psychiatry, and experimental psychology.

Dr. Montessori was appalled by the conditions suffered by so-called "mentally deficient" children. She worked with these children, refusing to accept the notion that they were beyond hope. After two short years, her "mentally deficient" children were reading and writing, and were able to pass the state examinations given to "normal" children, allowing them admission into regular schools.

An amazed world applauded her efforts, while she turned her thoughts towards educating "normal" children. In 1906, she was given the opportunity to establish a classroom for slum children ranging in age from three to six. Visitors to the school reported an incredible change in these unfortunate children who had become dignified, orderly, self-sufficient, literate and joyful beings.

The sight of these children who displayed the truly "normal" characteristics of childhood was the force which motivated Dr. Montessori for the remainder of her long life. As she traveled from country to country, lecturing, training teachers, helping to establish school after school, this same phenomenon was observed wherever conditions promoting its growth were perfectly realized.

THE MONTESSORI PHILOSOPHY

The basic idea in the Montessori philosophy of education is that all children carry within themselves the person they will become. In order to develop physical, intellectual, and spiritual potential to the fullest, the child must have freedom: a freedom to be achieved through order and self-discipline.

The world of the child, says Montessori educators, is full of sights and sounds which at first appear chaotic. From this chaos children must gradually create order, learn to distinguish among the impressions that assail their senses, and slowly but surely gain mastery of themselves and their environment.

Dr. Montessori developed what she called the "prepared environment," which already possesses a certain order and allows children to learn at their own speed, according to their own capacities and in a non-competitive atmosphere. "Never let children risk failure until they have a reasonable chance of success." The years between three and six are the years in which children learn the rules of human behavior most easily. These years can be constructively devoted to "Civilizing" children, freeing them through the acquisition of good manners and habits to take their places in their culture.

Dr. Montessori recognized that the only valid impulse to learning is the self-motivation of the child. Children move themselves toward learning. The teacher or "Directress" (in Montessori language) prepares the environment, directs the activity, and offers the child stimulation, but it is the child who learns, who is motivated through work itself to persist in a given task. Every child is different and learns at different rates

according to their own interests and motivations. It is crucial not to compare a child's progress with another. The non-competitive environment allows the child freedom to explore without the pressure of keeping up and being evaluated according to adult criteria. If Montessori children are free to learn, it is because they have acquired an "inner discipline" from their exposure to both physical and mental order. A goal in Montessori is to offer the child an environment which will stimulate his desire and love of learning. This is the core of Dr. Montessori's philosophy.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The main objective of The Garden Montessori School is to provide a carefully planned, stimulating environment which will help children develop within themselves the fundamental habits, attitudes, skills and ideas which are essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning.

The special goals for the children who attend The Garden are:

- To develop a positive attitude toward school and learning.
- To develop a sense of high self-esteem.
- To acquire the basic skills and habits of concentration for a lifetime of learning.
- To develop and foster an abiding curiosity.
- To develop habits of initiative and persistence.
- To foster inner discipline and a sense of order.
- To develop sensory-motor skills in order to sharpen the ability to discriminate and judge.
- To help develop each child's innate, ultimate potential through high self expectations.

Curriculum

THE MONTESSORI PRIMARY CURRICULUM

Dr. Montessori believed that no human being is educated by another person. He or she must do it by himself or herself or it will never be done. A truly educated individual continues learning long after the time he or she spends in the classroom, because that person is motivated from within by a natural curiosity and love of knowledge. Dr. Montessori felt, therefore, that the goal of early childhood education should not be to fill the child with facts from a pre-selected course of studies, but rather to cultivate the child's own natural desire to learn.

In the Montessori classroom, this objective is approached in two ways: first, by allowing each child to experience the excitement of learning by his or her own choice rather than by being forced; and second, by helping the child to perfect his or her natural tools for learning, so that the child's abilities will be maximized for future learning situations.

The Montessori learning materials have this dual, long-range purpose in addition to their immediate purpose of giving specific information to the child. They are attractive, child sized materials that are self-correcting; that is, if a child makes an error, he or she can see it by looking at the material itself. In this way, no adult is needed to point out a mistake. In the 3-6 environment, mistakes such as spelling or math miscalculations are not corrected. Although the child may be capable of these skills at a young age, the focus is on the **process of discovery** and arriving at an answer. This further enhances his excitement for learning and self confidence. Fine tuning these skills will come. Because they can choose their own work and do it at their own pace, children have many opportunities for success in the Montessori classroom. In addition to the four main Montessori curriculum areas, Daily Living, Sensorial, Math and Language, all children will be exposed to many other areas of study. These include physical geography, botany, history and cultural awareness, cooking and nutrition, arts and crafts, music and body movement, and science and nature.