



The Garden Montessori School
HANDBOOK

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Table of Contents

Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
GENERAL INFORMATION.....	4
MISSION STATEMENT.....	4
HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL.....	4
ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION.....	4
ADMISSION.....	4
REFUNDS.....	5
LATE FEES AND OTHER CHARGES.....	6
GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.....	7
ARRIVAL / DISMISSAL PROCEDURE.....	7
ABSENCES / ATTENDANCE.....	8
DELAYS AND CLOSINGS.....	9
IN-SERVICE DAYS.....	10
HEALTH POLICY.....	10
HEALTH AND WELLNESS.....	11
ALLERGIES.....	13
MEDICAL EMERGENCIES.....	13
MESSAGES.....	13
ANNOUNCEMENTS.....	13
WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.....	14
THE PEACE ROSE.....	14
SELF DISCIPLINE.....	14

GRIEVANCE OR CONFLICT RESOLUTION	14
CONFERENCES.....	15
SPANISH	15
CLOTHING	15
LIFE CELEBRATIONS.....	16
PORTFOLIOS & GRADUATION.....	16
LUNCHES	17
SNACK	17
TOYS.....	17
PARENT PARTICIPATION	18
PARENT EDUCATION.....	18
THE MONTESSORI METHOD OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	19
DR. MARIA MONTESSORI.....	19
THE MONTESSORI PHILOSOPHY	19
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	20
THE MONTESSORI PRIMARY CURRICULUM.....	21
SUMMER CAMP AND SUMMER EXTENDED CARE POLICY.....	21
SNOW DELAY POLICY -Addendum.....	22
TRAVEL POLICY	23
International Travel during Covid-19.....	23
Domestic Travel During Covid-19	24

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 Durkin founded The Garden Montessori School in June of 1999. The Garden provides a quality Montessori Pre-school through Kindergarten 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 Cranberry Commerce Park in Cranberry Township with enough space to house four classrooms and support facilities. The Garden has three 3-6 year old classrooms and an Extended Care classroom.

We offer Spanish Language instruction weekly.

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 and the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services for the Extended Care Program. 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 at www.gardenmontessori.com. 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, in order to have the child considered for possible enrollment and/or placed on our waitList.

Before a child is accepted, he or she will have the opportunity to visit the classroom after school hours for an informal meeting. This meeting 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 8 months and 3 years 6 months by September 1 of the school year assuming develop, or at the time of enrollment. All enrolled children must be potty trained, or very close to it, to enroll at the Garden Montessori School and Summer Programs.

The School will notify Parents by mail of their child's acceptance. A non-refundable enrollment deposit is required within ten working days of acceptance to hold the child's place for the next term.

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 from 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:

- o Fall term is from the first day of class in September through the last day of class in December according to the school calendar
- o 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 \$300 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 \$300 enrollment deposit.

The Garden has a long standing policy of refunding a prorated portion of tuition – excluding the non-refundable \$300 enrollment deposit – if and when a suitable replacement is fully enrolled.

In the case of Force Majeure: The School’s duties and obligations under this Contract shall be suspended immediately without notice during all periods that the School is closed because of force majeure events including, but not limited to, any fire, act of God, hurricane, war, governmental action, act of terrorism, epidemic, pandemic, or any other event beyond the School’s control.

If such an event occurs, the School’s duties and obligations in this Contract will be postponed until such time as the School, in its sole discretion, may safely reopen. In the event that the School cannot reopen due to an event under this clause, the School is under no obligation to refund any portion of the tuition paid.

The School promises to provide a Continuity of Education in the event of a school closure that will include blended learning opportunities (take home packets, online instruction for groups, small groups and individuals). Please review the Continuity of Education Plan posted on our website.

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 Student’s 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 and DISMISSAL PROCEDURE

Arrival procedures are as follows:

- **Alert the staff if you or your child have travelled outside of the country or visited another state.** Families will be greeted in carline where parents will get their child out of the car and allow them to walk to the door where a staff member will greet the child(ren). Parents and other family members will not be allowed inside the building. Prior to parents leaving the site, a trained staff member will take the temperature of their child(ren) and ask parents the following questions:
 - Do you live with anyone or have you had close contact with anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 within the past 14 days?
 - Do you or anyone in your household have a fever, cough and/or shortness of breath?
 - Do you or your child(ren) have any other signs of communicable illness such as a cold or flu?
- Children and staff will be required to wash their hands immediately upon entering the building and frequently throughout the day. When children are received for drop-off, they will first exchange their shoes for either crocs or socks. They will then be escorted into the bathroom where their hands will be washed prior to being brought to their classroom.
- 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.

Dismissal procedures are as follows:

- Promptly arrive 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 ahead three or four spaces to buckle the children.
- No child will be dismissed to anyone whom you have not authorized via your ProCare registration. You may add or delete names as needed throughout the year in writing once the school year has begun. 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.
- The staff has the responsibility to prepare the classroom for the Pre-K and K sessions, as well as the end of day cleaning. Late pickups greatly interfere with this process and are not acceptable . Your child will be transferred into the Extended Care Room and you will be charged the Extended Care Room hourly pricing.

ARRIVAL / DISMISSAL SCHEDULE

Morning (Primary) Program - Rose	8:30 – 8:45 Arrival and 11:30 – 11:45 Dismissal M – F
Morning (Primary) Program - Arbor	8:45 – 9:00 Arrival and 11:45 – 12:00 Dismissal M – F
PreK Program – Rose	8:30 - 8:45 Arrival and 2:00 - 2:10 Dismissal T, W, Th 8:30 – 8:45 Arrival and 11:30 - 11:40 Dismissal M & F
PreK Program - Arbor	8:45 – 9:00 Arrival and 2:10 - 2:20 Dismissal T, W, Th 8:45 – 9:00 Arrival and 11:45 - 12:00 Dismissal M & F
Kindergarten Program	8:15 - 8:30 Arrival and 3:00-3:15 Dismissal T, W, Th 8:15 - 8:30 Arrival and 11:15 - 11:30 Dismissal M & F
Extended Care	Early Drop Off: 7:30 AM Pick Up : 5:30 PM

ABSENCES / ATTENDANCE

Please notify the school by 8:30 the first day of any absence.

DELAYS AND CLOSINGS

The Garden follows the Seneca Valley School District schedule for school closings or delays for bad weather or snow. Parents will receive an email notifying them of a delay or closing and the web site will be updated. Parents can also watch the three local television stations for the Garden Montessori School listing.

BEFORE SCHOOL CARE IS AVAILABLE AT 10:00 AM in the event of a 2 hour delay. Extended Care is available until 5:30 PM.

BEFORE AND EXTENDED CARE IS NOT AVAILABLE IN THE EVENT OF A CLOSING.

MODIFIED SCHEDULE IF SENECA VALLEY HAS A 2 HOUR DELAY:

Morning (Primary) Program - Rose 10:30 – 10:45 Arrival and 11:30 – 11:45 Dismissal M – F

Morning (Primary) Program - Arbor 10:45 – 11:00 Arrival and 11:45 – 12:00 Dismissal M – F

PreK Program – Rose 10:30 - 10:45 Arrival and 2:00 - 2:10 Dismissal T, W, Th

10:30 – 10:45 Arrival and 11:30 - 11:40 Dismissal M & F

PreK Program - Arbor 10:45 – 11:00 Arrival and 2:10 - 2:20 Dismissal T, W, Th

10:45 – 11:00 Arrival and 11:45 - 12:00 Dismissal M & F

Kindergarten Program 10:15 - 10:30 Arrival and 3:00-3:15 Dismissal T, W, Th

10:15 – 10:30 Arrival 11:15 - 11:30 Dismissal M & F

IN-SERVICE DAYS

In-service days are meant to serve as workdays for our teaching staff, although students will not attend class. The teachers use In-Service days for training and additional cleaning. **Extended Care is operational on In Service Days.**

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 100.4) - 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**
- **RESPIRATORY DISTRESS**
- **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.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Health Measures

- Children will wash hands several times daily – upon entering, before and after snacks, after toileting, after using any art type activity or practical life activity which involves water, and before leaving for the day.
- Upon your arrival to pick up your child, a staff member will bring your child to your car. It will be your responsibility to buckle your child into your vehicle. We will maintain social distancing and direct contact as much as possible.

Healthy Environment

- Kindergarten children will not share materials -carpets, aprons, pencils, markers, scissors or glue. Each child will be provided with personal materials for their individual use.
- All classrooms will remain separated, there will be no mixing of students at any time; this will help us to reduce the possibility of viral transmission. This includes recess time outdoors.
- Kindergarten children will have an assigned desk area where they will be physically distanced yet will be able to remain socially connected with peers.
- Children will have an assigned “dot” to maintain physical distance during all group activities.
- Movement and musical activities will be provided frequently to prevent children from sitting for lengthy periods at a time.
- Classroom materials will be used for a single child. All used items will be placed in a bin where they will be cleaned and sanitized by staff before being returned to the shelf.
- At this time – NO items from home are allowed. This includes accessories – big bows, jewelry, toys, lunch boxes or backpacks. We are requesting that no “flip shirts” be worn – these types of shirts encourage physical touching.
- Staff will disinfect high-touch surfaces, such as door handles, light switches, faucets, that children touch at least twice daily.
- Staff will perform an enhanced deep cleaning every night in all areas, on all touched surfaces.
- Staff will have access to anti-bacterial hand sanitizers and disposable gloves and use them as needed.
- We realize that keeping children in a facemask for a prolonged time period may actually cause more harm if the child is touching their mask frequently. We will deal with face mask issues case by case. There are other protection methods available – and although not perfect, may provide smaller children with a “safer” form of protection. Details will be shared. Cloth face masks are recommended by CDC at this time. They may be provided by parents or the school will have face masks available. Facemasks are NOT required for children.
- Any child who becomes ill during the school day will be transferred to a separate classroom under supervision until a parent/guardian arrives to pick the child up.

Child Health

- Staff will receive education on COVID-19 symptoms as well as preventive measures.
- Children who start to experience symptoms of respiratory illness, including a fever of >100.4 while at child care, will be isolated from other children until they can be picked up and will not be permitted to return without a doctor note.
- Until further notice, all program field trips will be suspended.
- All supply deliveries will be received at the front door – delivery personnel will not be permitted inside the facility.

Staff Health & Wellness

- Staff will receive additional training on infection control and workplace disinfection.
- Staff will not share their phone, devices or meal or utensils with one another or children.
- Staff will check their temperature at the beginning of each shift and notify their supervisor if >100.4 as well as self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and notify their supervisor if any develop (fever or respiratory symptoms).
- Staff will wash their hands immediately upon entering the program and throughout the day.
- Staff will not be allowed to work if they are feeling ill or experiencing respiratory symptoms.

Communication

- If the current situation changes and it becomes necessary to update our procedures or close our program temporarily, we will notify key family contact by email.
- You may follow our website and Facebook pages for late-breaking program updates.

Protocol if COVID19 is confirmed in a child or staff member

- Close off all areas used by person who is sick.
- Open outside doors to increase air flow in affected areas.
- Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who is sick.
- Confer with the Butler County Health Department
- Communicate information to the families that the School will be closed for 2 days for deep cleaning
- Require minimum 14 day quarantine for infected person. The time frame in which they can return will be mandated by a physician note.

We will continue to monitor applicable state and local guidelines. We will update these procedures as necessary.

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. They should be the ORIGINAL PRESCRIPTION child-proof container 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 LOOSE SUCH AS 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 epic-pen, we must have a written diagnosis from their physician as well written directions for administration and dosage directions.

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 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

Messages are relayed to the appropriate Teacher or the Administrator and phone calls are returned as soon as possible.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

To minimize misunderstandings or forgetfulness, the school requests that all messages and other information to the staff be 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 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 paint can on the floor). If the student disregards the rules of the classroom community, the Directress 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 Directress may request the Administrator or another Directress 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 Directress. Directresses are your first resource to answer your questions and resolve your difficulties.
- 2.) If the Directress 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 Directress, 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 phone conference at any time by telephoning the school. We will schedule formal phone conferences for the Morning and PreK students 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. Kindergarten phone conferences will be scheduled for October and January.

SPANISH

To be determined this 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 you would be disappointed if they got 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. We ask that each child leave a pair of rain boots at the school.

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.

The 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. PLEASE NO FLIP SHIRTS or extra accessories such as air bands, jewelry, purses, etc.
- 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 must have crocs or socks in 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 crocs to be kept at school. Please mark the child's name on both crocs. **PLEASE NOTE NO CLOTH SLIPPERS. All slipper choices must be able to be washed and dried quickly – hence CROCS being the preferred style this year.**

LIFE CELEBRATIONS

Since we frequently have children with birthdays in the summer months we have adopted an alternative way to celebrate each and every child. Due to COVID restrictions, more details will follow on how we plan to celebrate this year in the classroom.

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 will offer the parents an opportunity to produce a portfolio which includes pictures of the child during various activities in all areas of the classroom. During the final months of the Kindergarten third 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 a CD of their pictures.

LUNCHES

The Pre-K, Kindergarten and Extended Care students will have lunch at school and must arrive in a disposable brown paper bag. 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 provide a healthy and balanced meal and nothing will be returned home. Label your child's brown paper bag 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.
- We **cannot** heat foods up . Please remember the entire lunch must be disposable (no thermos, no plastic Tupperware, etc).

SNACK

Please provide a **daily** prepackaged snack with your child's name printed clearly.

TOYS

Nothing will be permitted from home – no toys, blankets, stuffed animals, books, etc.

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 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.

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.

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 environments, 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.

SUMMER CAMP AND SUMMER EXTENDED CARE POLICY

Payment of a non-refundable, non-transferable deposit of \$50 per week, per child, must accompany the registration form. The deposit amount is deducted from the total amount due. All summer camp and summer Extended Care balances are due the date specified in the camp enrollment packet. Refunds are not granted for withdrawals.

There are no refunds for absences; as there are no provisions for make-up classes. There are no refunds for change of summer plans, transfer from the area, prolonged illness or any other reason.

Full payment for all programs is due on the date specified in the camp enrollment packet. You will be invoiced for any balance owed on the summer sessions by April 1st. If final payment is not received by the designated date, the space may be forfeited and given to the next student on the waiting list. If you register after May 1st, full payment is due at time of registration, providing space is available. A fee of \$25 will be charged for any check that has insufficient funds.

SNOW DELAY POLICY -Addendum

Over the 17 year history of the school we have tried all types of variations to alleviate inconveniences to working parents. I assure you that the established policies are the safest for our entire population.

When the Garden opened in 1999 we followed the Seneca Valley District closings until, like now, I got several complaints from the parents regarding the fact that we do not have children standing out waiting for buses or walking distances to the school, therefore the District delay policy "was not applicable to the Garden". I changed the policy so that we determined our own delays. Given the following scenarios and the change in location to our current space I feel it is strictly for the safety of our children and the staff that we adhere to the District policy.

While the children arrive in cars and are not standing out in the cold waiting for buses these are the factors which we need and have considered for the safety and well-being of the student population and the staff:

Because they arrive in cars the children frequently are not properly dressed for the temperatures, arriving with no hats, gloves, inappropriate winter attire (short/no sleeves etc.) and even no socks. At times it takes several minutes for the children to get out of the cars and into the school beyond a safe period of exposure to frigid temperatures.

If for some reason we would have to evacuate the school it would be severely detrimental to try to get the children over to St. Ferdinand's safely with this lack of clothing.

The cold temperatures affect children and staff with any breathing and heart issues. The staff needs to be outside for sometimes over a half an hour getting the children safely into the school. While they are properly dressed it is detrimental to their well-being to be out as long as they are. While a lot of families have the ability to have warmed cars by housing them in garages etc., there are several families that do not have this convenience. (Another perspective.) The fact that the younger children only come for one hour is very difficult in many ways. I understand it is a short amount of time that they are in school. However, a few years ago we tried extending their time by an hour until 12:30. This is not feasible for the entire schedule for the rest of the school population specifically on Pre-K and Kindergarten days for the following reasons:

- The classrooms need to be cleaned and the transition needs to be made for the afternoon programs.
- We do not have enough staff to facilitate these tasks while also tending to the needs of the children during lunch, while also maintaining the appropriate number of staff needed in the classrooms and dismissal for the "little ones" at 12:30.
- The "little ones" get extremely hungry by this point and already having had snack, generally when they first come in at 10:30, they become irritable and unfocused.
- It is also difficult to keep the school warm in the excessive cold due to the high ceilings, concrete floors and large windows.
- From a legal stand point since we are located in the Seneca Valley School District and we do not call a delay in snowy or dangerous weather conditions such as what we have experienced so far this winter, the Garden is liable and responsible for the well-being of our families and children.

- An inconvenience is far better than placing even one child in danger.

Also, to once again reiterate: There are several ways to know that there is a delay or closing: you will receive an email, it is listed on the Web site and on the 3 local TV stations, WTAE, WPXI, and KDKA. WPXI also offers an automatic text feature to let you know if Seneca Valley is closed.

If Garden Montessori School closes more than 4 days per school year due to inclement weather, we will adhere to a make up schedule as noted on the academic calendar.

TRAVEL POLICY

International Travel during Covid-19

If you have travelled internationally or are considering it, please enroll in the Department of State's STEP program to receive updates on how to stay safe when and where you are travelling. However, the US government urges you to remain in the US unless there is a life-or-death emergency abroad. Additionally, the US government provides a constantly updated color-coded World Map to easily view Travel Advisory Levels in different countries.

[Department of State's STEP program](#)

[World Map: Covid-19 Travel Advisory](#)

If you have travelled abroad or are currently abroad, *please* visit this link to see whether it is required for you to return as soon as possible or if you must quarantine upon your return:

Travel.state.gov

Travel.state.gov.country.specifics

See below for easy guides on what to do if you either have travelled or will travel and what to tell the Garden Montessori.

Steps to Take if Planning on Travelling Internationally:

Enroll in the STEP program through the link provided above.

Check the Travel.state.gov links *and* the color-coded world map on information. Please remember that the US government mandates that international travel is only permitted if there is an emergency. These emergencies must *be life or death*, which involves the serious illness, injury, or death of an immediate relative. Depending on the country, you may want to reconsider travelling or travel may be banned there altogether.

If you still plan to travel after checking these sites, please notify the school.

Upon your return, it is likely that you must quarantine for 14 days. The Travel.state.gov.country.specifics link allows you to choose a country and see if you legally must quarantine.

Steps to Take if You Have Already Travelled Internationally:

If you have not already done so immediately upon return, please quarantine for the 14-day period. If

you happened to contract Covid-19 while abroad, the quarantine allows enough time for symptoms to appear.

If you experience Covid-19 symptoms during the 14-day period, please get tested if possible. If for some reason a test is not available to you, stay at home and take care until the symptoms are gone.

Domestic Travel During Covid-19

Currently, all travel within the US is permitted. If you plan on doing so, please visit this link from the CDC on safety guidelines while doing so.

[CDC Domestic Travel](#)

Both we and the CDC recommend checking the state government's site of where you plan on travelling. Depending on number of confirmed cases and deaths from Covid-19 in that state, you may want to either exercise regular caution or increased caution to ensure your safety and the safety of others. Here is a link to the health departments of all 50 states, territories, and the District of Columbia:

[US Health Departments](#)

If you have already travelled domestically, a 14-day quarantine is *not* required but we suggest you notify the Garden Montessori. If you plan on travelling domestically but have not already, be sure to check the CDC and the relevant state health departments for Covid-19 updates and notify the School.

Everyone has a duty to do our best to ensure our health and our family's health. The Garden Montessori prioritizes keeping our families healthy and safe during this global pandemic. We pride ourselves in our strong sense of community and are looking forward to learning together in an environment in which everyone can feel safe. We hope that everyone has been doing well in these circumstances.