



Family Handbook  
2014-2015



**CITY GARDEN MONTESSORI SCHOOL  
FAMILY HANDBOOK**

**PLEASE NOTE:**

**Each City Garden household will receive a copy of the Family Handbook.**

**We will periodically make revisions to the handbook and add items to it.**

**Thank you for your cooperation, and for helping make City Garden Montessori a wonderful place for children and families!**

**SCHOOL CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**City Garden Montessori School  
1618 Tower Grove Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63110  
(314) 664-7646  
Fax (314) 664-4479  
info@citygardenschool.org**



1618 Tower Grove St. Louis, MO 63110  
314/664-7646

Dear Parents,

Welcome to City Garden Montessori School! Our unique neighborhood school offers a safe and peaceful setting bolstered by the engaging educational strategies of the Montessori Theory of Development and philosophy. In joining our community, you are becoming part of an exciting innovation for the city of St. Louis. Excellent instructors and committed support staff will lead your child through a productive and fulfilling school year.

City Garden classrooms will appear different to any parent who has not experienced a Montessori classroom before. Our rooms are organized to provide your child with the most effective and inviting way to learn complex and interesting concepts. We choose the unique materials you see to give your child two gifts: a strong challenge to learn and a high level of support to ensure his/her success.

Our primary goal is to ensure that each child masters essential skills in the core subject areas of language arts, mathematics, science, history, and geography, while integrating the arts, physical activity and community service into the curriculum. The rich economic, racial, and cultural diversity of our neighborhood means that we have additional goals beyond essential classroom skills: we also value the life skills of nurturing true community and working for social justice. At City Garden, we all learn how to value differences, how to value our local *and* our global world, and how to live peaceful and sustainable lives. We have a strong commitment to Anti-Bias and Anti-Racism work and actively working to dismantle both bias and racism.

We offer this Family Handbook as a means of getting to know City Garden and to familiarize you with our **Mission** and **Vision**. Let this handbook be your resource when you have questions regarding policies or procedures at the school. Please read through the Handbook carefully. As our year goes on, we invite you to ask questions, observe in your child's classroom and engage your child in a conversation about what happened during his/her school day.

It is my privilege to serve you and your children this year at City Garden. Please come forward with enthusiasm, commitment and suggestions for our community.

In Partnership,

Dr. Nicole Evans  
Principal

# WHO'S WHO AT CITY GARDEN

## PERSONNEL

*All staff members can be reached at the school phone number: 314-664-7646.*

### Academic Staff

Principal – Nicole Evans  
School Secretary – Sharmouel Mosley  
Family Support Coordinator – Kristina Mavers-Vogel

nicole@citygardenschool.org  
sharmouel@citygardenschool.org  
kristina@citygardenschool.org

### **Primary Guides**

Amy Willems  
Shannon Adams  
Lead Guide – Primary 2  
Melissa Buckley  
Melissa Urspruch  
Sheila Fitzsimmons

amy.willems@citygardenschool.org  
shannon@citygardenschool.org  
primary2@citygardenschool.org  
melissa.buckley@citygardenschool.org  
melissa@citygardenschool.org  
sheila@citygardenschool.org

### **Lower Elementary Guides:**

Anne Lacey  
Amanda Edwards  
Kate Nelson  
Trisha Anderson  
Darcell Butler  
Katie Miller

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amanda@citygardenschool.org  
kate@citygardenschool.org  
trisha@citygardenschool.org  
darcell@citygardenschool.org  
katie.miller@citygardenschool.org

### **Upper Elementary Guides:**

Trent Rouse  
Rosella Altman  
Kay Howard  
Julia Weyhaupt

trent@citygardenschool.org  
rosella@citygardenschool.org  
kay@citygardenschool.org  
julia@citygardenschool.org

### **Junior High Guides:**

Amy Denother  
Eileen Wellinghoff

amy@citygardenschool.org  
eileen@citygardenschool.org

### **Reading Specialists:**

Cathy Bain  
Anne Beney  
Kathy Scally

cathy@citygardenschool.org  
anne.beney@citygardenschool.org  
kathy@citygardenschool.org

## **Special Educators:**

Ann Newman  
Christine Phillips

ann.newman@citygardenschool.org  
christine.phillips@citygardenschool.org

## **Specialists:**

Physical Education – Shannon Ulery  
Spanish – Roger Reyes  
Music – Tosha Pearson-Royston

shannon.ulery@citygardenschool.org  
roger@citygardenschool.org  
tosha@citygardenschool.org

## **Administrative Staff**

Executive Director – Christie Huck  
Executive Assistant – Debra Fox  
Director of Development – John Carroll  
Assistant Director of Development – Rasheen Coleman  
Business Office and Facilities Coordinator – Tiffany Murphy  
Community Outreach Coordinator – Pat Garrett  
Lunch and Volunteer Coordinator – Tina Hunsberger

christie@citygardenschool.org  
debra@citygardenschool.org  
john.carroll@citygardenschool.org  
rasheen@citygardenschool.org  
tiff@citygardenschool.org  
pat@citygardenschool.org  
tina@citygardenschool.org

*City Garden also has a number of students from Saint Louis University who work and volunteer in our Before and After School programs, providing child care for events, in our classrooms and helping with day-to-day needs.*

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Leslie Peters	Board Chairperson
Joel Achtenberg	Member at Large
Anthony Beasley	Governance Committee Chairperson
Kristy Carstensen	Treasurer, Finance Committee Chairperson
Stephanie Co	Development Committee Chairperson
Julien Couilloud	Member at Large
Mark Cross	Member at Large
Liz Fathman	Member at Large
Jamie Huch	Member at Large
Patricia Hurst	Member at Large
Laura Jenks	Secretary
Dave Orwick	Member at Large
Keith Willy	Member at Large

## **PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC) LEADERSHIP**

Jamila Owens-Todd	President
Taggart Long	Vice President
Elke Overton	Secretary
Lenny Jones	Treasurer

# **CITY GARDEN MONTESSORI SCHOOL: WHO WE ARE**

## **Mission Statement**

The mission of City Garden Montessori School is to provide a high-quality education to a diverse student population following the philosophy of Maria Montessori and to cultivate young people who value and respect themselves, others, the environment and the world community. In the process of nurturing our students to be creative, lifelong learners, we will strive to strengthen families, the neighborhoods we serve and the City of St. Louis as a whole.

## **Vision**

In the process of nurturing our students to be competent, creative, lifelong learners who practice compassion, respect, nonviolence and sustainability, we will strengthen families, the neighborhoods we serve, and the City of St. Louis as a whole. City Garden Montessori School will:

- Produce graduates who excel academically **and** are self-confident, compassionate and intellectually curious,
- Attract and sustain an intentionally diverse community of children and families and actively work to dismantle racism and other biases,
- Serve as a dynamic and integral partner in the communities we serve, and
- Provide leadership in education reform locally and nationally.

## **City Garden's Commitment to the Montessori Philosophy/ Theory of Development**

The Montessori Method of education, developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, is a child-centered educational approach based on scientific observations of children from birth to adulthood. Dr. Montessori's Method has been time tested, with over 100 years of success in diverse cultures throughout the world.

It is a view of the child as one who is naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a supportive, thoughtfully prepared learning environment. It is an approach that values the human spirit and the development of the whole child—physical, social, emotional, cognitive.

--American Montessori Society

## **City Garden's Commitment to Anti-Bias/ Anti-Racism**

City Garden Montessori School recognizes that racism and privilege are present in our culture and our school. We recognize the need to 1) become aware of the manifestations of racism and privilege in our own lives, in the systems we create and support, and in our culture, 2) work as a team to dismantle and reorganize the systems that support racism and privilege, 3) actively support each other and our families to acknowledge, honor and appreciate differences, and 4) incorporate anti-biased education at every level of our school.

City Garden Montessori School takes a progressive approach to transforming education that holistically critiques and responds to discriminatory policies and practices in education. Our school and our approach to education is grounded in ideals of social justice, education equity, and a dedication to providing educational

experiences in which all students reach their full potential as learners and as socially aware and active beings-- locally, nationally, and globally. City Garden Montessori acknowledges that schools are essential to laying the foundation for the transformation of society and the elimination of injustice.

The underlying goal of City Garden Montessori School is to affect social change. The pathway toward this goal incorporates three strands of transformation:

1. the transformation of self;
2. the transformation of schools and schooling; and
3. the transformation of our community, city and society.

Anti-bias education promotes learning about each other's differences, invites children to be proud of themselves and their families, teaches students to respect and honor difference, recognize bias, and to speak up for what is right. Anti-bias education not only addresses race and ethnicity but also includes gender, language, religious diversity, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities and economic class. Anti-bias education takes an active, problem-solving approach that is integrated into all aspects of an existing curriculum and a school's environment. An anti-bias curriculum promotes an understanding of social problems and invites students to invent strategies for improving social conditions.

### **City Garden's Commitment to Gender Diversity**

Diversity is often viewed from the lens of race, religion, socio-economic status, or family make-up. Another form of diversity is diversity of gender.

The historical view of gender states that from the moment we're born, our gender identity is no secret--we're either a boy or a girl. Even within the traditional view of gender roles, however, there has always been a wide range of gender behaviors. Some children view themselves as a different gender than their anatomy would indicate.

Gender, as we have come to learn, is determined by one's head and one's heart; sex is determined by one's biological makeup. For most individuals biological and psychological identity are the same, while for some that is not the case. (Much of the following comes from several sources, chiefly among them the book, *The Transgender Child*, by Stephanie Brill and Rachel Pepper.)

There is research that indicates that allowing a child to live in the gender role appropriate to his or her true psychological gender is the healthiest approach. Often, children who live with this difference are ostracized or even bullied by their peers, and their entire families are rejected by their home and school communities. Over 80% report experiencing violence related to gender. Sometimes even close family members and friends have turned away from them.

At City Garden, we believe in a diversity of diversities, so we support a variance of gender expression. We understand and uphold that gender is a spectrum that includes many variations between what is traditionally acknowledged as to what is male or female. For some adults, this possibility may be new or confusing, but for children it is easy.

Every day we strive to create respectful classrooms and a respectful school environment, where every person is comfortable being who he or she is, and where every person is equally deserving of kindness and respect.

### **School Objectives (from City Garden's Charter Document)**

1. CGMS will show strong academic outcomes, particularly in communication arts and mathematics.
2. CGMS will implement the Montessori approach to learning as our educational framework to the fullest extent possible.
3. CGMS will create and sustain a staff that is unified in its goals for student academics and behavior, communications with parents and professional accountability.
4. CGMS will educate the "whole child," serving children's intellectual, physical, social and emotional needs.
5. CGMS will value and promote diversity, global awareness and respect for all people.
6. CGMS will be a strong, caring community of families and learners.
7. CGMS will promote ecological awareness and environmental sustainability.
8. CGMS will be a force for urban stability, being a resource to the community and connected to the community.
9. CGMS will be effectively and responsibly managed and operated.
10. CGMS will be a financially viable, fiscally-prudent, public institution.

# **City Garden Montessori School**

## **School - Family Partnership Agreement**

City Garden Montessori School is a family-centered learning community: we take seriously our commitment to serve not only children enrolled in the School but the entire family. Children thrive when home and school work in harmony, with both environments sharing the same educational values and expectations. Choosing to attend City Garden means agreeing to a set of expectations related to the School's mission, operating principles, and policies. Those principles and policies are described here. We look forward to partnering with you this year!

### **Q. What can I expect of the School academically?**

***A. City Garden Montessori School aspires to fulfill its mission as a Montessori school.***

As a Montessori school, we are different from traditional schools. Our first commitment is to the multi-dimensional development of your child. Montessori children do amass a great deal of factual knowledge in school. However, our aim is for each child to be far more than a repository of this information: we guide each child to think for him or herself. Cognitive development and a solid academic foundation are important, yet they represent only one dimension of our aspirations for your child. Equally significant are your child's social, emotional, spiritual, and physical development.

Children are given choices and a great deal of freedom—within limits—during the school day. The choices a child makes, and the accompanying responsibilities, influence the emerging character of your child. By choosing her own work or shaping it to a considerable degree and following that work through to completion, while working independently or in cooperation with others, the Montessori child identifies his or her interests and develops his or her individual gifts.

Significant emphasis is placed upon community service. Younger children learn by serving their small community, *e.g.*, classmates, classroom, and family. As they grow, children reach out to the larger community and experience the many rewards of helping others. The children gain awareness and appreciation of others, of the challenges faced by others and, equally important, of their own strengths and abilities to help others and affect the world around them. Community service is an integral and important part of their lives and stays with them well beyond their City Garden years.

We treat each child with dignity and respect and expect that he or she will treat all others in the same manner. We treat each child as an individual and strive to develop each child's unique gifts—within the context of the classroom and the community. With freedom comes responsibility, and each child learns to balance his or her personal freedom with a clear sense of responsibility to his or herself, to others, and to the community as a whole.

### **Q. What can I expect in terms of communication from the School?**

***A. We aim to maintain open, honest, timely, and respectful communication with you about your child and about information affecting the community.***

There are two regularly scheduled parent communication conferences each year, accompanied by report cards. In the event of special concerns, your child's guide will contact you to discuss these concerns by phone, by email, or in person. In addition to conference reporting, classroom guides will communicate with you via classroom letters and newsletters, email messages, and short reports as needed for individual children.

Each City Garden guide is a well-trained professional, and his or her evaluation is confidential and based on direct observation of your child. Guides will always offer their current best understanding of your child's progress and his or her strengths and needs. For all children, this evaluation is based on the guide's observation, which may be augmented by input from the Principal and/or auxiliary staff. In addition to work sampling and observation, City Garden adheres to Missouri State expectations related to assessment and standardized testing. We report the results of these assessments annually.

Regarding ongoing School-wide communication, City Garden distributes a newsletter, as well as a *Family Handbook*, Calendar, and other letters, emails and publications. We also ask you to attend Parents Advisory Committee meetings and other events/ activities at the school.

**Q. What can I expect of the environment?**

***A. We strive to ensure an environment that is physically and emotionally safe and supportive as well as aesthetically beautiful.***

Dr. Montessori said that the classroom guide's first responsibility is to prepare the environment. The learning materials should correspond to the developmental characteristics of the child at each level, and those materials must be attractive to the child: correct in size, aesthetically pleasing, well maintained, and complete. More broadly, the whole environment must appeal to the child and inspire his or her work. This is our commitment at City Garden Montessori School.

Our community of children and adults comprises a social environment and culture that impacts your child's experience. We strive to make this environment emotionally supportive and safe for every child. This does not mean that there are no problems. It does mean that we will work with your child in developmentally appropriate ways to deal with problems as they arise, empowering him or her with social skills and aiding her in the development of emotional intelligence to prepare for a lifetime of working with others in different communities and organizations.

**Q. What professional standards can I expect of the School and faculty?**

***A. City Garden Montessori School aspires to maintain the highest pedagogical standards of Montessori practice.***

At a minimum, all lead guides hold a bachelor's degree; a number have earned master's degrees as well. In addition, Primary and Elementary guides have a post-graduate diploma from a Montessori guide training center. Charter school faculty either have Missouri State Teaching Certificates or are working to complete certification. Junior High guides have subject-area certifications. Our guides have a strong sense of mission in working with children and demonstrate high standards for themselves and their students.

The School promotes a culture of professional growth in a number of ways. City Garden promotes a school and staff culture of rigor, joy and continuous learning and growth. The administration plans and provides for professional development in concert with the faculty, and based upon the goals and needs of the school. City Garden builds in many development days, as well as regular team planning time. Guides work annually with the Principal to create a Professional Growth Plan driven by goal-setting for professional development. City Garden is currently sponsoring two guides in Montessori training.

**Q. What can I expect of the School administration?**

***A. Integrity: a focus on the needs of the individual child in harmony with the life of the community; mission-driven decisions embodying good stewardship and responsible management; and an open door to your questions or concerns.***

Administrative team members interface with all the various constituencies of the School: students, parents, extended family, faculty, alumni, prospective parents, professional visitors, government officials, other schools and educational organizations, and the general public. In your interactions with

the administration, you can expect professional, courteous, and business-like conduct, as well as mutually respectful communication.

The Principal and Executive Director work closely with one another. They often face decisions requiring a balance of competing priorities. Sometimes those factors are mutually exclusive; sometimes equally well-intentioned adults see matters differently. In making decisions, administration will focus on the interest of the individual child in balance with the needs of the School as a whole.

The school is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, and, as a charter school, City Garden is accountable to Saint Louis University, as well as the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**Q. What is the School's most basic expectation of parents?**

***A. We expect parents to make continuing efforts to both understand and embrace the Montessori approach and our commitment to diversity and anti-bias/ anti-racism, and to work in partnership with the School.***

City Garden expects parents to understand and embrace the mission of the school. To that end, we strive to provide opportunities for parents to learn about the school's mission and approaches. The school asks parents to familiarize themselves with the philosophy, policies, and procedures contained in the *City Garden Family Handbook* and other School publications, to understand your child's classroom expectations, to stay in regular communication with your child(ren)'s guides and to attend Parent Communication Conferences throughout the year. The school also asks each parent to volunteer two hours or more each month. City Garden is a community school and relies upon the participation of the whole community to be an excellent, nurturing place for children and families.

**Q. What contribution can I make to create a positive School community?**

***A. You can demonstrate respect for all adults and children, the School, and the School's programs.***

Be a role model for your children. Show respect for them, their classmates, parents of classmates, guides and other School staff—in short, for everyone associated with the School. Respect begins with civility and deepens into trust. Our most fundamental behavioral guidelines for the children are "Respect yourself, respect others, and respect the environment." We expect the same from adults, parents, and School staff, at all times and in all relationships within the School community. This includes speech and outward behavior.

Support your child by speaking of her/his guides, classmates, and School in positive terms. Respect and abide by the School's policies and procedures. Honor your commitments. Look for ways to make a positive contribution to the life of the School.

**Q. What are my responsibilities regarding communication between home and School?**

***A. We expect you to maintain an active, direct, and respectful two-way communication with the School.***

Read communications that are sent home: these may include letters, newsletters and calendars. Inform the School in a timely fashion of pertinent changes in your child's life. Active communication involves parents sharing observations and concerns about their child with the child's current guide. In matters large and small, remember the principle of respect: even when there is disagreement, disagree respectfully.

# City Garden Montessori School

## School – Family Partnership Agreement

### Signature Page

#### Mission Statement

The *mission* of City Garden Montessori School is to provide a high-quality education to a diverse student population, following the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, and to cultivate young people who value and respect themselves, others, the environment and the world community.

#### Vision

In the process of nurturing our students to be competent, creative, lifelong learners who practice compassion, respect, nonviolence and sustainability, we will strengthen families, the neighborhoods we serve and the City of St. Louis as a whole.

As a parent (or guardian) of \_\_\_\_\_  
*Please list all children's names here*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I understand and commit to the following:

- Alongside the guides, as a parent I will keep lines of **communication** open by:
  - Alerting guides when there may be a reason that your child is not feeling his/her best on any given day.
  - Attending parent communication conferences and any others that may be necessary.
  - Asking staff questions when I don't understand a policy or procedure.
  - Attending parent information meetings.
  - Reading classroom newsletters, monthly school newsletters and other written notes from school.
  - Adding dates of school events and the school schedule to our family calendar.
  - Notifying the school when my child is absent.
  - Notifying the school when there are phone number, address or email changes.
  - Letting my child's guide know when something special happens in our family, whether a special occasion, like the birth of a sibling, or a change like a divorce or the death of a family member or a beloved pet.
  
- Reinforcing the **learning environment** by:
  - Bringing my child to school on time well rested.
  - Reading alongside my child for at least 20-30 minutes a day.
  - Limiting "media time"—TV, videos/DVD's, video games, computer, etc. to an hour or less per day.
  - Expecting that no two children will be working on exactly the same level and refraining from competition and comparison.
  - Being familiar with and using the Classroom Handbook and City Garden Montessori Family Handbook to help keep school routines running as smoothly as possible.
  
- Support the **core values** of City Garden Montessori by understanding that:
  - City Garden is committed to implementing the Montessori philosophy to the greatest extent possible.

- City Garden is an anti-biased, anti-racist school, and is actively working to dismantle racism and other “isms” in our community and our culture.
  - No violence will be tolerated at City Garden Montessori at any time, whether verbal, physical, psychological (bullying) or in play.
  - The future of our planet depends on teaching our children to love the fragile systems of the earth on which all life depends.
- Support the **growth and success** of City Garden Montessori by:
- Each parent volunteering two hours or more per month.
  - Attending parent education events, Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings, social events, helping in my child’s classroom and staying informed about the needs and activities of City Garden.
  - Helping with various fundraising efforts as I am able.

Parent Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ARRIVING AND LEAVING

### DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP (INCLUDES CHANGES FOR 2014-2015!)

A Traffic Flow Map is included in the Appendix.

**Traffic Flow:** City Garden is a neighborhood school, and is proud to be situated in the Botanical Heights neighborhood. We aim to be a good neighbor, and to ensure the safety of everyone, especially our children. Since we moved to our current facility in 2012, we have continued to learn and to refine procedures. Last school year, we asked for feedback from parents, staff members and neighbors regarding safety and traffic flow. Based on input, we are implementing a number of procedures in order to increase safety, to minimize the impact of traffic to the greatest extent possible and to be respectful of our neighbors. These changes include the following:

- We will have volunteer traffic/ safety directors strategically positioned during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up.
- Families are encouraged to bike, walk and carpool to school to minimize traffic.
- All bikers and walkers are asked to enter through the parking lot entrance on Blaine or the pedestrian entrance on Tower Grove Avenue. Bikers are asked to walk once they enter school grounds.
- The alley that intersects with McRee Ave. will be exit only for City Garden traffic. A parabolic mirror will be installed so that visibility is increased.
- Traffic will be directed off of Tower Grove Avenue to the greatest extent possible. Drivers are asked to take alternate routes through the neighborhood. A detailed description for traffic flow/ alternate routes will be distributed and posted on the website. We will implement this during a trial period and then seek input from parents and the wider community, and make adjustments as needed.
- Signage will be installed guiding drivers, walkers and bikers and to increase safety.
- Cars will not be allowed to park on the parking lot between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.
- Handicap parking spots in the parking lot and on Blaine Avenue may not be used by individuals not licensed to do so.

**Morning Drop-Off:** City Garden Montessori School will open its doors each morning at 8:00 a.m. All children should enter by the Blaine Avenue door (main entrance, off of the parking lot) and will be greeted by staff members. Parents are always welcome to enter the building with their children to say goodbyes or touch base with the classroom guides. However, we do ask that you allow your child to get him or herself situated (hang up backpack, coat, etc.) by him or herself, and that you do not stay in the classroom longer than necessary. This helps foster independence, and allows the children to move into their morning work upon arrival. At 8:25, the "Living Room" (formerly called the Atrium) will transition into a silent area, where our reading specialists and special education instructors will begin to work with students. We ask all parents who are present in the building after 8:30 to sign in at the front entrance and indicate where you will be in the building. At 8:30, the whole school building will transition into the morning work period.

Students who arrive after 8:30 will be required to check in at the office and will be given a tardy slip for their class. Lessons begin in the classrooms promptly at 8:30 so please leave a note if you arrive after this time and need to communicate with the classroom staff.

**Afternoon Pick-Up:** The children will be dismissed promptly at 3:30 each day. All children will wait inside to be picked up. We will attempt to make pickup flow as smoothly as possible. Car riders will exit the building from the gym and will be escorted to your vehicle by a staff member. The children walking home from school with parents will be dismissed from the main door.

**Non-Parent Pick-Ups:** Please make sure that City Garden Montessori School has a list of all people other than parents who are authorized to pick up a child. We appreciate a reminder call when this pick up is out of the ordinary. After checking the authorized list, we will check the person's ID before the child is released. If the person is not on the list, the child will not be released to them unless you come in to add them to the list.

**Late Pick-Ups:** If you are unexpectedly delayed at dismissal time, parents should call the school immediately. Leave a message on the school voice mail if no one is able to answer your call. If the child is not picked up by 3:45 pm, s/he will go directly to After Care and a fee of \$15.00 a day will be required ***upon pick up*** for students picked up after 4:00 pm. Students who are picked up prior to 4:15 will be assessed a fee of \$7 ***upon pick up***.

**Regular Before Care** is available every day through City Garden. Children may sign up for one day per week, or all five. The fee for before care is \$7 per day and this includes breakfast. The hours are 6:45 – 8 am. Please contact Tina Hunsberger at 314 -664-7646 or [tina@citygardenschool.org](mailto:tina@citygardenschool.org) for more information. A detailed description of Before Care is included in the Appendix.

**Regular After School Care** is available every day through City Garden. Children may sign up for one day per week, or all five. The fee for After care is \$12 if you sign up before the day, or \$14 if you don't sign up beforehand. Contact Shannon Ulery at 314 -664-7646 or [shannon.ulery@citygardenschool.org](mailto:shannon.ulery@citygardenschool.org) for more information. A detailed description of Before Care is included in the Appendix.

## WHAT TO WEAR

**Dress Code:** City Garden Montessori School's dress code includes the basic colors of khaki, navy and white. All shirts should have a collar. Shirts, pants, skirts, shorts and jumpers should be in those basic colors. Skirts and shorts should be appropriate lengths, reaching to the fingertips of the students when arms are straight down the side of the student. Logos or emblems (other than City Garden Montessori logos) should be no larger than a quarter. We feel that the dress code contributes to a serious learning atmosphere in our school. Backpacks should also be worn each day.

**Out of Uniform:** Occasionally City Garden will have an "out of uniform" day. These will be announced in advance in the school newsletter. We ask that you use good judgment in your child's attire on those days.

**Shoes:** Please wear closed-toe shoes for the safety of our students. Flip flops, sandals, etc can be dangerous to students as they explore outdoor areas and activities. Students will have PE classes every three days and tennis shoes will be necessary.

**Spare Clothes:** It is very helpful for the children to leave a spare set of clothes in a zip lock bag with their name on it at school. Accidents and unexpected illnesses can occur at any time; having that spare pair of underwear, socks, etc., can lessen the anxiety when accidents happen. (The spares do not have to be uniform clothing.)

**Lost and Found:** Children are strongly encouraged to keep track of their own belongings. Parents can help by marking items with permanent markers. The school is not responsible for any items the child may have lost. There is a lost and found basket in the school office, which is emptied every two weeks. All unclaimed items are given away to a local charity.

## ATTENDANCE

**Attendance:** Daily attendance is crucial to your child's success in school and to build a strong learning community at City Garden Montessori School. Our dedicated guides plan for 7 hours of classes each day, and every hour will be filled with the lessons your child needs to complete the three-year Montessori curriculum and proceed to the next level. Please plan doctor and dentist appointments during after-school hours and on Saturdays as much as possible. Also, we appreciate your family limiting vacation times and other travel to regularly scheduled school breaks, such as **Winter Break, Spring Break and Summer Break.**

If you choose to keep your child home for a non-serious, non-medical reason, please be aware that City Garden Montessori School receives approximately \$45 less than if your child had been in attendance that day. Please consider seriously the impact your decisions have on your child's education and our school's financial health.

Please make sure you contact the school office if your child will be absent. If your child is not at school, and we have not heard from you, a staff member will call, to ensure that your child is safe. If your child has excessive absences or tardy days (ten or more), a staff member will contact you. Please let your child's guide and/ or our family support coordinator know about anything that might be impacting your child's attendance. Our goal is to support children and families holistically, and we will do whatever is possible to support your children and you, to ensure success.

## **BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PROGRAM**

Fresh Gatherings Café will be serving breakfast, lunch and after school snack to City Garden students. Operated by the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics at St. Louis University, Fresh Gatherings Café focuses on fresh, seasonal, and locally grown food. Fruits and vegetables are harvested from SLU's own organic garden or sourced from farmers within 150 miles of St. Louis whenever possible. This is an exciting collaboration with our charter school sponsor (SLU), as well as a great way to enhance our commitment to health and nutrition and environmental sustainability.

All breakfast prices are \$2.50 per breakfast.

Prices for free, reduced-priced, and full-price lunches are below. **Eligibility** for free and reduced-price lunch is determined by the United States Department of Agriculture. All families are asked to fill out a Free and Reduced Lunch Eligibility Form within the first week of school; this form determines your eligibility. If you have questions, please see **Sharmouel Mosley**, our school secretary.

Free, \$0.00   Reduced-Price, \$0.70   Full-Price, \$4.00   Milk, \$0.50

Annually, you will receive an application for the lunch program. A menu will be sent home at the beginning of each month.

A detailed description and form for the school food program is included in the Appendix.

**Bringing Lunch to School:** If your family decides to provide lunch, don't forget a healthy, balanced lunch each day, packed so it does not need refrigeration or warming. (We are not able to put food in the refrigerator or warm it in the microwave). We prefer soft, insulated lunch bags. Cold packs that go into the freezer each night are great for keeping food cool. Insulated containers can keep food warm.

**Nutrition and Allergic Reactions:** A nutritious lunch, high in protein, will give your child the fuel s/he needs for productive mental and physical activity. Children are asked not to share food from their lunches with each other because of varying family philosophies on food and nutrition. No candy or soda will be allowed, as these provide no nutritional benefits. Please limit items containing sugar.

Though we realize packing a lunch is a lot of work, it is often better for your child and better for our environment. We encourage you to consider packing a "trash-free" lunch: pack things in reusable containers, avoid individually packaged items and ask your child to bring home baggies so that you can rinse and use them again. Everything we do to help the Earth makes a difference!

**Food Allergies:** *Due to severe allergies, we are a Nut Free school.* Please check each packaged item to see if it has been manufactured in a Nut-Free facility. Additionally, please check with your child's guide for any other known food allergies before sending in something for the entire class to share.

## **THINGS THAT SHOULDN'T COME TO SCHOOL**

Please leave all electronics, money, toys, cell phones, chewing gum, and anything fragile or valuable at home unless specifically requested by the guides. Leave anything that could be construed as a weapon (like a Swiss Army knife) at home. (See Discipline Procedures section.)

## **ACTIVITIES FEE AND SCHOOL SUPPLIES**

Families who are able to are asked to bring in school supplies for the classroom and to pay a \$50 activities fee. This fee goes toward supplies, materials and field trips for your child and our classroom as a whole. We ask for this contribution up front, rather than asking you to send in smaller amounts throughout the school year for field trips, supplies, etc. If you are able to contribute more than the \$50, excellent! Thank you for supporting our classroom environments.

## **AT HOME**

**Homework:** Each grade level will have homework that is appropriate for the children's ages and abilities, and supports their academic development. Please support your child by ensuring that he or she completes homework each night and that he or she has a calm, quiet place to work.

\*Please remember that it is the recommendation of the Pediatric Society that children have 1 hour of physical activity per day.

\*Please see the recommended homework chart of page 27.

**Daily Reading:** Each child should read or be read to each night; participation in the Accelerated Reader Program is a core part of our curriculum.

**Limited Media:** Please limit media time (any activity that uses a screen s/he watches) to under one hour per day. Limiting screen time supports children's brain development, physical development and academic growth.

## **CALENDAR, EARLY DISMISSAL AND SCHOOL CLOSINGS**

### **Calendar**

The school calendar is included in the Appendix. Please note that activities and events will be added throughout the year. The most up-to-date calendar is always available on the school website: [www.citygardenschool.org](http://www.citygardenschool.org).

### **Early Dismissal Days / Holidays and Vacations**

Early dismissal days, holidays and vacations are indicated on the school calendar. Please check your calendar for early dismissal days, which begin at 1:00 pm.

### **Emergency School Closings**

Because our students' learning time is essential to their growth, and because we know how challenging it can be for parents to find child care at the last minute, City Garden Montessori School strives to hold school if at all possible. However, when necessary, school administration will make the decision to close school.

## **Full Day School Closing**

In the event that school is closed, the Principal will send out an email in the morning to alert families, and a note will be posted on the school Facebook page. (Like us on Facebook if you don't already!) You can also tune in to the local TV channels or radio stations (Fox 2, News 11, News Channel 4, Channel 5 and 1120 AM KMOX radio) for school closing information. This information will be available by 6:00am.

## **Late Start/ Snow Schedule**

Last year we began to use a "Late Start." When we have a late start, everything will begin one hour later than usual. This means that the school will open at 9:00 a.m., and classes will begin at 9:30 a.m. **On late start days, Before Care will be cancelled.** Late starts will also be announced by email, Facebook and news outlets by 6:00 a.m.

## **Early Dismissal**

In the case of early dismissals due to emergency school closings, families will want to have a plan in place for the child to be picked up. If an early dismissal is necessary, attempts will be made to notify parents/guardians by email, phone and/ or text. We will also attempt to communicate with parents about cancellation of the After School Program. If you think that there may be a change in dismissal time, call 314 664 -7646.

## **COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL**

**News by Email:** CGMS will use email as a primary means of communication. The Principal will send a bi-monthly Friday newsletter out via email and print. We will send a paper copy home with the oldest student in every family. We will also use email to send out updates, information and volunteer requests, etc. Please let us know if you DO NOT check email at least once a day and we will send you a paper copy of all information. Email is also a great way for us to keep in touch with non-custodial parents; please make your preferences in this area clear to us in the office, so we can keep all parents involved, whether they are with their children daily or not.

**School Reach:** City Garden has begun to use a new tool called "School Reach" to contact parents about important information. You will receive a phone call or text regarding important information, emergencies and important events or activities. Please ensure that we have your cell phone number so that you receive these messages.

**Close Communication Between School and Home:** One of the most important indicators for educational success is close communication between home and school. Parents are asked to check in regularly with your child's guide, and to let us know if there is something unsettling happening at home, for example, a serious illness of a family member, the loss of a pet, a move to a new house or marital separation, so that we may better understand and offer emotional support to the child and your family during these times if it is needed.

**Principal's Coffee:** The Principal will hold a monthly Coffee in the Gym at 9:00 am on the last Friday of each month. This is to further foster a personal relationship with the school leader, gain parent input and suggestions, and to answer any questions/concerns that parents may have throughout the school year.

## **"Let's Talk About Montessori" Parent Information Sessions**

The fantastic "Let's Talk About Montessori" Parent Information Series is designed to allow parents the opportunity to experience the joy of learning in our classrooms. There will be sessions for parents to participate in learning with their child and a session where parents and guides will talk about the Montessori curriculum. Information sessions are marked on the school calendar, and you will receive information and reminders in the classroom and school newsletters. We look forward to sharing with you the wonderment of Montessori.

# PARENT INVOLVEMENT

## Parent – School Partnership

Parents have been instrumental in the development and planning for City Garden Montessori School; our school's success depends on the generous spirit and participation of our parents. Active participation by everyone in the school community enables City Garden to help your child be all that s/he can be, and helps us to further our mission and vision. The Parent – School Partnership Agreement is at the front of this handbook; please ensure that all parents/ guardians read the agreement.

## What Does It Mean When We Say City Garden is a Place Where Parents are Highly Engaged?

### **We love for our parents to be engaged and involved!**

Though the Board of Directors is responsible for the governance of the school, and the administration and staff are responsible for curriculum/ programming, personnel matters and the operations of the school, we could not make all of this happen without the support and involvement of our parents. Our parents help to create the *culture* of our school. Working in partnership with our staff and leaders, parents help to make the values and ideals in our mission statement and our charter come to life.

This is accomplished by:

- Being involved in your child's classroom and staying in touch with your child's guide.
- Helping to build community among our parents and families—informally, by reaching out and building relationships with other families, and formally, by coming to school events and getting to know other parents. As a diverse school, we have a special opportunity to expand our worldviews and enrich one another's lives!
- Sharing your expertise, time, treasure, passion and positive spirit with our school—through volunteer work, spreading the word about City Garden, serving on a Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) committee, talking to new or prospective parents, thanking supporters, pitching in with an event or fundraiser, leading a club after school or serving on a Board committee.
- Offering feedback to staff and/ or administration when you think something is wonderful, and when you think something could be improved. We really do want to hear from our parents! We also often face decisions requiring a balance of competing priorities. Sometimes those factors are mutually exclusive; sometimes equally well-intentioned adults see matters differently. In making decisions, administration will focus on the interest of the individual child in balance with the needs of the school as a whole.
- For parents interested in a PAC position, PAC has outlined a nomination and election process, and has outlined a committee structure, which is in the Appendix. PAC is an all-parent organization, and welcomes all parents' involvement!
- For those interested in a Board or Board Committee position, we have outlined a nomination and selection process, as well as areas of expertise needed for these volunteer positions. This information is on the website or can be requested from Christie at [christie@citygardenschool.org](mailto:christie@citygardenschool.org). An outline of the governance structure, and a description of Board committees is in the Appendix. All Board meetings are open to the public, and parents are always welcome to attend.

## **Volunteering**

In order to make our wonderful school possible, we ask that each parent contribute 2 hours or more of volunteer service per month at City Garden. This makes a huge difference in what we are able to accomplish! Please contact Tina Hunsberger (tina@citygardenschool.org), or your child's guide, about ways to get involved.

## **Fundraising at City Garden**

At City Garden we are committed to provide an education and an experience for each of our students that is top notch. We know that our Montessori environment is equivalent to any private Montessori school in the St. Louis area! We do not want any of our students to miss out on the opportunity to grow and thrive due to a lack of resources. In order to accomplish this, fundraising is necessary.

Charter schools in Missouri receive approximately 25% less funding than public school districts. Our Primary program does not receive any public education funding, nor do any of our additional programs, such as Before and After Care, or school clubs. Our breakfast and lunch program is also subsidized.

We fundraise for many things that traditional public schools in our city are not able to offer: two instructors in every classroom, full sets of Montessori materials, a full-time Family Support Coordinator, a full-time Community Outreach Coordinator, technology, excellent professional development for our faculty, sliding scale tuition for our Primary program, a state-of-the-art building, and much more. All of these things lead to excellent outcomes for our children.

We invite everyone to help provide our students with top-notch education by participating in fundraising efforts. We ask every parent to give in the way that works for them—by giving \$5 or \$5,000, contributing to the rummage sale, selling pizzas, hosting a house party or inviting people to the annual gala.

Fundraising is not only an important way to financially support our school, but it is also a great way to spread the word about City Garden and its impact in our community, and to have fun! It is also one of the best ways for parents to make new friends at City Garden.

You will hear more about opportunities to get involved in fundraising at City Garden throughout the school year.

Thank you for helping make City Garden possible!

## **CLASSROOM VISITS**

### **Visiting and Observing in our Classrooms:**

Visiting and observing in your child's classroom is one of the best ways to learn about the Montessori philosophy and your child's school experience; we encourage all parents to observe in your child's classroom periodically.

In order to keep our classrooms child-focused, we strive to minimize the number of adults in a classroom at any given time. Thus, we will limit observers to one at a time, and will have a sign-up sheet for observation times.

(Occasionally we have outside visitors and the school makes arrangements with guides to have more adults observing; however, one at a time is the norm.)

Please read the letter and observation guide in the Appendix, which will be utilized during classroom observations.

## STUDENT BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT

*“Let us remember that inner discipline is something to come to and not something already present. Our task is to show the way to discipline. Discipline is born when the child concentrates his attention on some object that attracts him/ her not only with the useful exercise but with the control of error.”*

**--Maria Montessori, The Absorbent Mind**

### **Introduction:**

True discipline, Montessori believed, comes from within. Our aim is to show the child the way to discipline. The child who can obey his/her inner guide is a disciplined child, Montessori wrote,

*“The peaceful atmosphere that pervaded the classroom as the children pursued their work was extremely touching. No one had provoked it, and no one could have obtained it by external means.”*

This type of discipline is a developmental process. In a Montessori classroom, there are children who have developed a degree of self-control and those who have little. The guide must observe the children and endeavor to put them in contact with work which engages their concentration. For it is only through the work of the child that true discipline will come.

The Montessori environment provides the children with the guidance (or limits) they desire. The child learns to solve problems by himself first or seek out help, as well as developing critical thinking skills. Children learn their strengths and challenges and accept those with confidence, with the desire to learn more.

The following will serve as guidelines for supporting children in their road to self-discipline. As such, these strategies aim to clarify our approaches to common situations with children as they gain self-control. They are not directives, however, and it is essential to remember that each situation with each child will require its own responses to best support that child's growth.

### **Goals For Life:**

- I can be productive and follow directions even if I am mad. (overwhelmed by my feelings)
- I can be productive and follow directions even if others are not okay.
- I can be productive and follow directions even if I don't want to. (even if it's difficult)

### **The Path to Self-Discipline:**

We believe setting limits for behavior is important for the safety and protection of children, others and the environment. We believe consistency to be important in order to help the child orient him/herself in the world. An atmosphere of clarity and consistency also enhances the staff's ability to help children to learn and to be safe and secure. Ultimately, setting limits for behavior aims to teach children self-discipline. We aim to help children to learn the consequences of their behavior so that they will understand how their actions affect those around them.

Children become self-disciplined and self-directed so that their needs and interests become clearer to themselves and those around them. Children have an enormous capacity for social learning. This means that they absorb information all around themselves, including social and cultural “cues” regarding themselves, others and the environment in which they live. Awareness of self, others and the environment is a vital quality for all children to develop in order to live harmoniously with others. Discipline is a means by which children are helped to develop that awareness.

By setting appropriate and consistent limits to behavior we provide a secure environment in which children can explore their physical and social world. Every classroom has rules and limits to which the entire class must adhere to ensure a productive learning environment. It is the charge of every guide to be responsible for every

student attending City Garden. In essence, each faculty member is responsible for nurturing and guiding the full City Garden student body in a way that:

- Supports self-esteem and allows children to feel capable, competent and pleasant with others.
- Takes into account a child's developmental level of understanding and ability.
- Changes as children's needs and behavior changes (there is change and growth).
- Acknowledges caring, cooperative, desirable behavior.
- Is expressed positively. We speak of what we "do" and not what we "don't do."
- Guides, gives simple explanations, and offers alternatives so that a child can make choices. In time, this will aid the making of appropriate choices.
- Is consistent.
- Is based on self-discipline and self-control (not coercion).

### **Structure for Self-Discipline:**

- Knowing the children: this helps to tailor the best approach of discipline for each child.
- Prepared environment: this helps to facilitate freedom of movement.
- Awareness of transition time: guides help children move from one activity to another without disruption.
- Modeling good behavior.

### **Our Support for Self-Discipline**

#### **Preventative:**

- Guiding Self-Discipline
- Character Development Lessons
- "Acting Right" Model of Behavior Instruction and Management

#### **Responsive:**

- Guide Redirect: Redirection will be based on the behavior exhibited at the guide's discretion and may include such things as skill practice, more structure and limited freedoms.
- Safe Seat: Faculty protect the student and the learning environment when a student is demonstrating disruptive behavior by guiding him/her to a safe seat. A safe seat is an appointed area in each classroom away from classroom activities. A safe seat provides an area that supports de-escalation and helps a student re-gain control of emotions. Further, it provides an area for him/her to process the occurrence and problem-solve with the guide. It is also preventative in that students can request to go to the safe seat to calm down before a potential situation becomes problematic.
- Buddy Room: The buddy room is a safe seat in a different classroom. It is utilized when the safe seat in the student's classroom was not successful in helping him/her calm down and re-join the learning environment.
- In addition, a Care Team process may be implemented to discuss and brainstorm about repetitive behaviors that interfere with the environment

If deemed necessary, a guide may elect to refer the student to the Principal's Office where the Principal's professional judgment will determine the next course of action. Typically, the Principal will use this as another learning opportunity for the student. Nonetheless, consequences are critical when attempting to remediate a student's continued inappropriate. In extreme cases, there is the possibility of suspension or expulsion.

The purpose of City Garden's Discipline Policy is to modify behaviors where necessary and to have students make appropriate, responsible choices. Discipline takes a combined effort of parents, families, school and community. At school we work toward an environment that makes it easier for students to make good choices for themselves and the whole community.

Faculty members are empowered to be firm yet nurturing in their guidance, with education as their ultimate goal, rather than punishment. **Corporal punishment is prohibited in our school.**

**Likewise, parents/guardians are prohibited from displaying any form of corporal or physical punishment toward a student while on school premises. Should this occur, City Garden may be required by law to contact the Department of Child Protective Services in an attempt to serve the best interest of the child. Additionally, City Garden faculty, staff, and administrators are legally obligated to report evidence (verbal or physical) of abuse of a child.**

**Bullying:** Bullying can be defined as repeated and systematic harassment and attacks on others, perpetrated by individuals or groups. Bullying takes many forms and can include many different behaviors, such as, but not limited to:

- Physical violence and attacks
- Verbal taunts, name calling and put downs including ethnically-based verbal abuse and gender-based put downs
- Threats and intimidations
- Extortion or stealing of money and possessions
- Exclusion from the peer group

A student who engages in any act of bullying is subject to appropriate disciplinary action including suspension, expulsion or referral to law enforcement officials. If you believe your child is being bullied, contact the classroom guide who may then involve the Family Support Coordinator or the Principal.

*You may obtain a copy of City Garden's complete discipline policy, including guidelines for suspension, expulsion and due process, in the school office.*

## **SAFETY DRILLS**

**Fire, Earthquake, Tornado and Intruder Drills:** Drills will be conducted regularly as required by law. An Evacuation Map is posted in each area of the building used by students. Staff will be trained on what to do under various life-threatening situations and a Crisis Handbook outlining procedures will be kept in each classroom.

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY**

**Limits to Access:** Our students' safety is of the utmost importance to us, for the safety of the children, the doors of the school are locked at 8:30 each morning. Visitors are required to enter through the Blaine Avenue door and sign in and out at the office. Please see and help us enforce the procedures for arriving and leaving.

**Record Checking:** All school personnel have undergone a fingerprinting records check as well as a record check by the Missouri State Child Care Registry. Regular volunteers will also undergo a records check.

## **EVALUATION, ASSESSMENT AND PARENT CONFERENCES**

**Daily Evaluation and Assessment** is a normal part of the individualized, personalized education, which is the essence of the Montessori classroom experience. Children are accustomed to receiving lessons in small groups throughout the day, followed by opportunities to reinforce their knowledge by independent practice. Guide

observations and student work sampling is the most common method of evaluating and assessing student progress in a Montessori School. Our students' work is guided by customized work plans created by the guides to suit their unique needs.

**Formal Assessments:** Most formal assessment tools have been designed with the traditional classroom in mind. City Garden Montessori School has these goals for our assessments:

- The test should be child-friendly and an aid to further learning.
- Testing should not require too much time taken away from actual instruction.
- Each test should be easily understood by the parents.
- The test should help the guide learn more about what the child needs.
- Results of testing should be available soon after testing is complete.
- The tests should be scientifically designed to be reliable and free of bias.
- Any test should give to parents, stakeholders and authorizers (Saint Louis University and the MO Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) an accurate picture of what our students are learning.

**Parent Communication Conferences:** Parent communication conferences are held twice during the school year. The first parent communication conference is in October; the second conference is in April. Please refer to our school calendar for the specific dates when these conferences will take place. Ideally, both parents will have an opportunity to do a classroom observation before the conference. Alternate times for the parent to meet with the guides are usually available. Please contact the office or your child's guide if you have a concern that will not wait until the next scheduled Conference day.

**Report Cards:** CGMS' report card provides a summary of what your child has been introduced to within the Montessori classroom's three-year curriculum. The reports are given quarterly. Our goal is to give you an accurate picture of what your child is learning based on the three-year outcomes which are also identified by age group in the Appendix. For Primary 3, the report is reflective of a one-year curriculum. For Junior High, the reports are reflective of a two-year curriculum cycle.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**What is Special Education?** It is the design and delivery of specific individualized instruction when regular curriculum requires modification or supplementation to meet a child's academic needs. Special education requires knowledge of the standard curriculum, potential modifications, learning/instructional styles, assessment, and an understanding of state and federal laws and procedures related to academic services. Training in special education allows the guide to modify curriculum, provide supplementary aids, materials and services and make accommodations in the classroom and elsewhere to ensure the student's success. CGMS has a Special Services Coordinator, Dr. Ann Newman and a Special Educator, Christine Phillips, on staff to facilitate these academic services and to meet the needs of identified students. In addition, CGMS contracts with an organization called The Belle Children's Services of Saint Louis ARC to provide evaluations, OT services and speech services. The Belle Children's Services of Saint Louis ARC has many years of experience serving children with special needs in the St. Louis area, and come to us with valuable expertise. If you have questions about special education services, please see Dr. Nicole Evans, Principal or Dr. Ann Newman, Special Services Coordinator.

## ADMISSIONS

**Application Process:** Parents who are interested in applying for admission to City Garden School should plan to visit the school before completing the application process. In addition to the application form, we require a copy of the original birth certificate, 2 proofs of residence, the child's immunization records and a brief interview with the Principal to discuss the school's philosophy of education. The application deadline will be in mid-February of each year, and parents should call the school for the precise deadline. There can be no exceptions to the deadline for all required paperwork to be on file in the office. Entering students must be 5 years old by August 31 of the school year.

**Neighborhood Preference:** As stated in our Charter, City Garden Montessori School has a target geographic area bordered by Grand Avenue, Magnolia Avenue, Kingshighway and Interstate 64/40.

**Lottery Process:** Because of the many applications City Garden receives, there may be a lottery process for admitting students. Approximately 1 week after the deadline, a public lottery will be conducted, including all eligible applications that have been received on or by the deadline date. Applications received after this date will not be eligible for the lottery drawing. Upon receiving notification that a child has been admitted, families will have a limited time to accept or decline admission. Additional lotteries will take place to fill any spots that open up after the initial lottery; all students whose completed applications are on file will be considered in subsequent lotteries.

**Sibling Applications:** As defined in City Garden Montessori's Charter, younger siblings have priority for a space at our school. An application must be completed by the general deadline for all applications. The spirit of the sibling admission policy is to provide cohesiveness for all children in the same family while providing an equal opportunity for all students from the community to obtain admission to the school. With that in mind, a sibling is defined as a younger child, whose older sibling currently attends City Garden Montessori School, and within a typical week, resides in the same household as the older sibling. When a younger sibling is enrolled, the older sibling must remain at the school for the entire school year. Siblings who are qualified for the lottery are automatically given a seat provided sufficient space is available and an application has been received. Should there be more sibling applications than space available, the sibling applications will be subject to a lottery. This policy applies only to lottery age children.

**Activity Fee:** Each family is requested to provide an Activity Fee of \$50, to defray the costs of class trips and other expenses that enrich the curriculum for our students. Please turn this into the classroom guide. Guides ask for school supplies to be brought from home, but there will be no penalty to any family who cannot provide them.

## HEALTH POLICIES

**Absences for Illness:** Please call the office at 314-664-7646 as soon as you know that your child will be absent. Leave a message if necessary. If your child has not arrived by 9 a.m. and we have not received a call from you, you will receive a call from City Garden to ensure that all students absent from school are accounted for and are safe.

### **When to Keep Your Child Home:**

- **Fever** - **ALWAYS** keep your child at home if his/her temperature is 100 degrees or higher. If your child comes to school with a fever, you will be notified and be required to pick him/her up. Your child's temperature should be normal for 24 hours prior to his/her return to school.
- **Contagious Illnesses** - Notify the school if your child develops a communicable disease that calls for separation, isolation or other special measures to protect the health of others, e.g. strep throat, chickenpox, head lice, pink eye, ringworm, etc.

**Immunizations:** All students entering the school must have a medical form completed and signed by the child's doctor, including the most recent copy of immunizations. Religious exemptions are acceptable, but must be on

file with the office before the child begins school. A physical examination within one year of the child's entrance is required. We also appreciate having a copy of any lead test that has been done in your child's life.

**Injuries Away from School:** When your child arrives in the morning, please report to the school any injury that might affect her/his normal day. The staff will accommodate the student if at all possible so that learning is not disrupted. Specific written instructions that can be shared with all the staff are helpful.

**Injury or Illness During School Hours:** If a student is injured or becomes ill during school hours, the school will contact the parent or guardian if the situation warrants or if the student needs to be taken home. Staff will fill out an accident report form if the child gets injured, which will be sent home with the child. It is the **family's responsibility to inform City Garden Montessori when phone numbers or emergency contacts change.** We need to have at least three emergency phone numbers on file for your child.

**Medications:** In accordance with the laws of the State of Missouri, a school with the written permission of the child's doctor and parent may administer medication at school. The parent must complete a form available in the office before any medications can be given. All medications (even over-the-counter) must be delivered and picked up by an adult. No child is allowed to transport any medication to or from school. An adult must pick up all medications on the last day of school. Any medication not picked up will be destroyed.

**Emergency Contact Information:** City Garden will supply forms that gather contact information for our use in case of an emergency. It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school when the original information changes. This information is taken outdoors with the class so that it is readily available at all times to the supervising adult.

**Screenings:** Occasionally City Garden Montessori has the opportunity to provide free screenings that may help us understand your child's needs more completely. You will be notified if City Garden Montessori plans to do any non-academic screenings of all the children. Results of these screenings will be discussed with parents if they indicate that any action needs to be taken for the child's well-being.

## **CRISIS INTERVENTION**

**What Do We Mean by "Crisis?"** A crisis situation is defined as an event of such emotional and/or physical impact that it interrupts, either on an individual or group basis, the daily educational program. The City Garden Crisis Intervention Team is comprised of the Principal, Executive Director, Family Support Coordinator, Community Outreach Coordinator and Business Office and Facilities Coordinator. The Crisis Team will lead City Garden's response to and communication regarding crises, ensuring the safety and well-being of all students and prompt, clear communication with parents.

### **Care Team**

The CARE Team is a multi-disciplinary group of City Garden staff consisting of a lower elementary guide, an upper elementary or junior high guide, a reading specialist, the principal, the family support coordinator, a student's classroom guide, special educators and other specialists as needed. This collaborative team meets throughout the year to develop supports for a student experiencing barriers to learning. Problem solving takes place around academic, social/emotional, environmental, medical, and/or other areas of concern. The team operates a continuum of services including early identification, support and intervention, follow-up, and referral for additional services or data collection when appropriate, to maximize student learning. Informed parent consent will be obtained before any student is individually assessed by a member of the school, staff UNLESS the assessment is part of City Garden's screening activities (i.e., something done with a particular group of students) or the normal instructional process (i.e., reading assessments).

Characterized by concern, caring, responsiveness, and individualized attention, the CARE Team embodies a positive approach utilizing a student's strengths when developing supports. Your child's guide will contact you and seek your input if s/he believes a referral to the CARE Team would benefit your child's success in the

classroom. Questions about the Care Team process should be directed to the Principal/Special Services Coordinator (Dr. Nicole Evans/Dr. Ann Newman).

## **BIRTHDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS**

### **Birthdays**

Parents/guardians may celebrate their child's birthday with their child's class if they wish. Please coordinate any plans with the child's classroom guides in advance. Birthday party invitations may not be distributed in school unless all children in the class are invited. Use the school directory for student addresses to mail invitations. The main office will not give out any family information that is not listed in the directory.

### **Holidays**

Holidays of many cultures and religions are recognized in each class mainly from an educational point of view. Significant classroom time is generally not devoted to holidays. However, parents/guardians are invited to make a presentation or lead an activity related to a particular holiday and its customs. Please contact your child's guide if you are interested in leading the class in a holiday celebration.

### **Special Events**

Special events are initiated throughout the year by your child's classroom guide, the Social Engagement Committee or the school administration. Your participation in these events is always welcome and may be requested.

### **Excluding your child from celebrations**

Should you wish to exclude your child from an activity, notify your child's guide at the beginning of the school year or in advance of the celebration. A written note to the guide regarding the exclusion of your child's participation is required. At the discretion of the Principal, an alternate activity may be offered to your child.

## **FUNDRAISING AT CITY GARDEN**

Charter schools in Missouri receive approximately 25% less in funding than public school districts. Our Primary program does not receive any public education funding, nor do any of our additional programs, such as Before and After Care, or school clubs. However, at City Garden we are committed to provide an education and an experience for each of our students that is top notch. We know that our Montessori environment is equivalent to any private Montessori school in the St. Louis area! We do not want any of our students to miss out on the opportunity to grow and thrive due to a lack of resources. In order to accomplish this, fundraising is necessary.

We fundraise in order to provide many things that traditional public schools in our city are not able to offer: two instructors in every classroom, full sets of Montessori materials, a full-time Family Support Coordinator, a full-time Community Outreach Coordinator, technology, excellent professional development for our faculty, sliding scale tuition for our Primary program, a state-of-the-art building, and much more.

We invite everyone to help make our top-notch education possible by participating in fundraising efforts. We ask every parent to give in some way—by giving \$5 or \$5,000, contributing to the rummage sale, selling pizzas, hosting a house party or inviting people to the annual gala.

Fundraising is not only an important way to financially support our school, but it is also a great way to spread the word about City Garden and its impact in our community, and to have fun!

You will hear more about opportunities to get involved in fundraising at City Garden throughout the school year.

Thank you for helping make City Garden possible!

## **PARENT RIGHTS AND NOTIFICATION**

**Parent Notification:** There are a number of federal and state statutes, which require school districts to provide parents, guardians and students with information pertaining to City Garden Montessori Board policies that affect them. The No Child Left Behind legislation has significantly added to the list of required parental notifications. The following policies are available in the school office for parent review at any time. These policies provide the guidelines for how such incidents at City Garden Montessori School will be handled.

- > Bullying
- > Student Records
- > Student Suspension/Expulsions
- > Weapons & Dangerous Instruments
- > Child Abuse
- > Nondiscrimination

### **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) at City Garden Montessori Charter School:**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

1. Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.
2. Parents or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records that they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.
3. Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
  - School officials with legitimate educational interest;
  - Other schools to which a student is transferring;
  - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
  - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
  - Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
  - Accrediting organizations;
  - To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
  - Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
  - State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. Schools must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letter, inclusion in a PTA bulletin, student handbook, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school.

**Concerns/ Complaints:** Most concerns or issues can be handled through simple communication with those involved. If the issue cannot be resolved at this level, then it is appropriate to contact the Principal about the concern or complaint. If the issue cannot be resolved with the Principal, parents may contact the Executive Director. If the issue still cannot be resolved, parents may contact a member of the Board of Directors. A list of the Board of Directors and their contact information can be found at the end of the handbook. If the issue cannot be solved at the school level, parents of charter school students may contact City Garden Montessori Charter School's sponsor, Saint Louis University. Contact information for Saint Louis University can be found at the end of the handbook.

#### ***Parent Concern Communication Protocol***

When addressing problems, please follow this simple protocol:

Classroom or Program Guide » Principal » Executive Director » Board of Directors » Saint Louis University (charter school sponsor) liaison

### **NON-DISCRIMINATION AND RIGHTS UNDER NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND**

#### **Statement of Non-Discrimination**

City Garden Montessori School admits students of any race, color, national ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ability, sexual orientation, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, organizational practices, scholarship or loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

#### **Equal Education Opportunity**

It is the policy of City Garden to provide a free and appropriate education for disabled students. Disabled students are those who, because of certain atypical characteristics, have been identified by professionally qualified personnel as requiring special educational planning and services. Disabled students will be identified on the basis of physical, health, sensory, and/or emotional handicaps, behavioral problems or observable exceptionalities in mental ability. It is possible that a student may have more than one type of disability.

City Garden's programs and services available to meet the needs of these students will be in accordance with The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, and SS 162.670 - .995 RSMo., Missouri Special Education Services. In addition, the identification of disabled students and the services provided by City Garden will be in accordance with the regulations and guidelines of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Current Plan for Part B of The Education of the Handicapped Act, as amended.

City Garden has special education specialists to provide direct services to students with IEPs and professional development to all instructional and administrative staff. When possible direct services will be provided within the classroom. Parents must sign a release to allow City Garden and its special education staff to assess a student for special education services.

## **PARENTS' RIGHT TO KNOW GUIDE QUALIFICATIONS**

Our district is required to inform you of certain information that you, according to The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110), have the right to know. Upon your request, our district is required to provide to you in a timely manner, the following information:

- Whether the guide has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the guide provides instruction.
- Whether the guide is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which state qualification or licensing criteria have been waived.
- Whether your child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.
- What baccalaureate degree major the guide has and any other graduate certification or degree held by the guide, and the field of discipline of the certification.
- In addition to the information that parents may request, districts must provide to each individual parent –
- Information on the achievement level of the parent's child in each of the state academic assessments as required under this part; and
- Timely notice that the parent's child has been assigned, or has been taught for four or more consecutive weeks by, a guide who is not highly qualified.

## **NCLB COMPLAINT PROCEDURES**

The Federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), Title IX Part C. Sec. 9304(a)(3)(C) requires the Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) to adopt procedures for resolving complaints regarding operations of programs authorized under the Act, including Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV (Part A), Title V, Title VI, and Title VII and Title IX, part C.

### **Who May File a Complaint**

Any local education agency (LEA), consortium of LEAs, organization, parent, guide, or member of the public may file a complaint.

### **Definition of a Complaint**

There are both formal and informal complaint procedures. A formal complaint must be a written, signed statement that includes:

1. an allegation that a federal statute or regulation applicable to the state educational agency (SEA) or a local education agency (LEA) program has been violated,
2. facts, including documentary evidence that supports the allegation, and
3. the specific requirement, statute, or regulation being violated.

### **Alternatives for Filing Complaints**

It is federal and state intent that complaints are resolved at a level nearest the LEA as possible. As described below, formal complaints filed with the SEA will be forwarded to the appropriate LEA for investigation and resolution. Informal complaints made to the SEA will be subject of an initial investigation by the SEA, but will be forwarded to the LEA if a formal complaint evolves. Precise processes in both instances are described below.

## **Informal and Formal Complaints Received by the Local Education Agency**

Informal and formal complaints filed with the LEA concerning NCLB program operations in that LEA are to be investigated and resolved by the LEA according to locally developed procedures, when at all possible.

Such procedures will provide for:

1. disseminating procedures to the LEA school board,
2. central filing of procedures within the district,
3. addressing informal complaints in a prompt and courteous manner,
4. notifying the SEA within 15 days of receipt of written complaints,
5. timely investigating and processing of complaints within 30 days, with an additional 30 days if exceptional conditions exist,
6. disseminating complaint findings and resolutions to all parties to the complaint and the LEA school board. Such findings and resolutions also shall be available to parents, guides and other members of the general public, provided by the LEA, free of charge, if requested, and
7. appealing to the Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education within 15 days

Appeals to the Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education will be processed according to the procedures outlined in sections below.

## **Informal Complaints Received by the SEA Office**

Informal complaints (i.e., verbal and/or anonymous) to the SEA by individuals (who may ask not to be identified to the LEA) concerning program operations in an LEA will be investigated by the SEA, according to procedures deemed most appropriate by the SEA, within 10 days of receipt of the complaint. Findings of this investigation shall be reported to the complainant within 10 additional days. In the event that the complainant requests further investigation or a hearing, the complainant must file a signed written complaint. This formal complaint will be processed according to procedures outlined in sections below.

## **Formal Complaints Initially Received by the SEA Office**

1. Record. Upon receipt of a written complaint, a record of the source and nature of the complaint, including the applicable program involved in the complaint, statute violated and facts on which the complaint is based, will be initiated.
2. Notification of LEA. Within 15 days of receipt of the complaint, a written communication will notify the district superintendent and the district NCLB coordinator of the complaint filed with the SEA. Upon receipt of the communication, the LEA will initiate its complaint procedures as set forth above. If the complaint is that an LEA is not providing equitable services to private school children, it also will be filed with the U.S. Secretary of Education.
3. Report by LEA. Within 20 days of receipt of the complaint, the LEA will advise the SEA of the status of the complaint resolution proceedings and, at the end of 30 days, will submit a written summary of the LEA investigation and complaint resolution. This report is considered public record and may be made available to parents, guides, and other members of the general public. A copy of this procedure also will be filed with the U.S. Secretary of Education, if it involves equity of services to private school children.
4. Verification. Within ten days of receipt of the written summary of a complaint resolution, the DESE office will verify the resolution of the complaint through an on-site visit, letter or telephone call(s). Verification will include direct contact with the complainant. If the complaint is about equity of services to private school children, the U.S. Secretary of Education shall also be given copies of all related communications.

## **Appeal to the SEA**

1. Record. Upon receipt of a written appeal to a complaint unresolved at the LEA level, a record of the source and nature of the complaint, including the applicable program involved in the complaint, statute violated and facts on which the complaint is based, will be initiated.
2. Investigation. The SEA will initiate an investigation within 10 days, which will be concluded within 30 days from receipt of the appeal. Such investigation may include a site visit if the SEA determines that an on-site investigation is necessary. By stipulation of all concerned, this investigation may be continued beyond the 30-day limit.
3. Hearing. If required by the SEA, or formally requested by parties to the complaint, this investigation will include an evidentiary hearing(s) before an SEA Division Director acting as chairperson and designated staff personnel. Conduct of such hearings will follow the procedures outlined in state rules. The hearing proceedings shall be tape recorded and the recording preserved for preparation of any transcript required on appeal. Within 10 days of conclusion of the investigation and/or evidentiary hearing(s), the SEA will render a decision detailing the reasons for its decision and transmitting this decision to the LEA, the complainant, and the district school board. Recommendations and details of the decision are to be implemented within 15 days of the decision being given to the LEA. This 15-day implementation period may be extended at the discretion of the SEA Division Director. The complainant or the LEA may appeal the decision of the SEA.

### **Formal LEA Complaints Against SEA**

1. Record. The SEA will record the source, and nature of the complaint, including the applicable program involved in the complaint, statute violated and facts on which the complaint is based.
2. Decision. The SEA decision will be rendered within 15 days of the complaint receipt. The LEA will be promptly notified of the SEA's decision.
3. Appeal. The LEA may appeal the decision of the SEA to the SEA review board within 30 days of receipt of the decision. Procedures under the "Appeal to the State Agency Review Board" section will be followed.
4. Second Appeal. An applicant has the right to appeal the decision of the SEA Review Board to the U.S. Secretary of Education. The applicant shall file written notice of the appeal with the Secretary within 20 days after the applicant has been notified by the SEA of its decision.

### **Complaints Against LEAs Received from the United States Department of Education**

1. Complaints against LEAs received from the U.S. Department of Education will be processed as though they had been received initially at the SEA.
2. A report of final disposition of the complaint will be filed with the U.S. Department of Education.
3. These procedures shall not prevent the SEA from partially or wholly interrupting funding of any LEA IASA program or taking any other action it deems appropriate.

### **Procedure Dissemination**

1. This procedure will be disseminated to all interested parties through the agency webpage at <http://dese.mo.gov> and to subscribers to the Federal Programs listserv.
2. This guidance will be distributed through regional and statewide meetings with Federal Programs Coordinators. LEAs are asked to incorporate the elements of the complaint procedure into their own policies and procedures.
3. DESE will also keep records of any complaints filed through this policy.

# APPENDIX

## THE MONTESSORI APPROACH TO EDUCATION

### Montessori Philosophy

In the early 1900's, Dr. Maria Montessori, Italy's first woman physician, developed educational materials and methods based on her belief that children learn best by doing, not by passively accepting other people's ideas and pre-existing knowledge. Dr. Montessori believed learning should occur in multi-age classrooms where children at various stages of development learn from and with each other. Her advice was always, "Follow the Child."

The Montessori approach succeeds because it draws its principles from the natural development of the child. The first level of development occurs from birth to age 6. At this stage, children are sensorial explorers, constructing their intellects by absorbing every aspect of their environment, their language and their culture. From age 6 to 12, children become conceptual explorers. They develop their powers of abstraction and imagination, and apply their knowledge to discover and expand their worlds further. (Schools are organized to reflect these stages; Primary classrooms 3 - 6 year olds, Lower Elementary 6 -9 and Upper Elementary 9 - 12.)

The Montessori guide's role is that of an observer, whose ultimate goal is to intervene less and less as the child develops. The guide creates an atmosphere of calm and order in the classroom and is there to help and encourage the children in their efforts, allowing them to develop self-confidence and inner discipline. With the younger students at each level, the guide is more active, demonstrating the use of materials and presenting activities. Knowing how to observe constructively and when to intervene is one of the most important talents the Montessori guide acquires through Montessori education and experience.

### Resources to Learn More About Montessori Education:

- [www.montessori-ami.org](http://www.montessori-ami.org)
- [www.montessoriconnections.com](http://www.montessoriconnections.com)
- [www.montessori.namta.org](http://www.montessori.namta.org)
- [www.montessori.org](http://www.montessori.org)

Please refer to the Appendix for more information about the Montessori Approach.

## Montessori Vocabulary

<b>Absorbent Mind</b>	The ability and ease with which the young child learns unconsciously from his environment.
<b>Control of Error</b>	The possibility inherent in the Montessori materials of making apparent the mistakes made by the child, thereby allowing him to see his errors after completing the exercises and to correct them.
<b>Cycle of Activity</b>	Those periods of concentration on a particular task that should be worked to completion.
<b>Deviated Child</b>	The child who has not yet found himself and thus is restless and difficult to control. He finds adjustment difficult and often escapes into a fantasy world.
<b>Didactic Materials</b>	The instructive materials used in teaching.
<b>Discovery of the Child</b>	Dr. Montessori's awareness and realization of the young child's abilities and his spontaneous love of work and learning.
<b>Freedom</b>	The child's free movements and experiences in an environment that provides a discipline through liberty and respects for his rights.
<b>Normalized Child</b>	The child who adapts easily and has acquired the self-discipline and control necessary to a healthy life.
<b>Practical Life Exercise</b>	Those exercises through which the child learns to care for himself and his environment.
<b>Prepared Environment</b>	An atmosphere created to enable the child to be free to learn through activity in peaceful and orderly surroundings adapted to the child's size and interests.
<b>Sensitive Periods</b>	Those periods of learning (language acquisition, order, movement etc.) during which a child is particularly sensitive to a specific stimulus.
<b>Sensorial Exercises</b>	Those exercises pertaining to the development of the five senses and for providing a foundation for speech, writing and arithmetic by use of the sensorial materials.
<b>Sensorial Materials</b>	The Montessori equipment designed to teach the child by means of focusing on specific sensory responses.

## **Montessori at a Glance**

### **MONTESSORI: Creating a Paradigm Shift in Education**

#### **Traditional Classroom**

Textbooks  
Pencil and paper  
Worksheets and dittos

Working and learning without  
emphasis on social development

Narrow, unit-driven curriculum

Individual subjects

Block time, period lessons

Single-graded classrooms

Students passive, quiet, at desks

Students fit mold of school

Students leave for special help

Product-focused report cards

#### **Montessori Environment**

Prepared kinesthetic materials  
with incorporated control of error  
Specially developed reference materials

Working and learning matched to  
the social development of the child

Unified, internationally developed  
Curriculum

Integrated subjects and learning based on  
developmental psychology

Uninterrupted work cycles

Multi-graded classrooms

Students active, talking with periods of  
spontaneous quiet, freedom to move

School meets needs of students

Special help comes to students

Process-focused assessment, skills checklist,  
mastery benchmarks

## Freedom and Responsibility A Montessori Approach

### Freedom

Choose daily work

Amount of time on an activity

Permission to observe and reflect

Use of glass, knives, etc.

Eating snack when hungry

Use of bathroom

Resolve own conflicts

Teach other children

Movement in the classroom

Choose place to work

Work outside

Travel throughout building

### Responsibility

Appropriate work choices and variety of presented materials

Staying on task and interested

Observe without interrupting others

Proper care and handling

Proper food handling and fair share

Good hygiene and proper use of facility

State needs, not physical contact, seeks adult help when necessary

Appropriate interaction, key points

Walking, maneuvering between student work areas

Appropriate space for activity and not interfering with another's work space

Stay within sight of windows

Walk in hallways, know how to get to destination

## **City Garden Montessori School Observation Guidelines**

Dear Visitor,

Greetings and welcome to City Garden Montessori School!

Thank you for visiting our school today. We are pleased that you are interested in learning more about our learning environments, our students, and our mission.

City Garden Montessori Charter School (CGMS) is the first Montessori, neighborhood charter school in St. Louis. We are proud to have an excellent academic program, a small, nurturing environment and a community of engaged and committed families.

You are welcome to spend some time observing in one of our classrooms this morning. When you enter the classroom, please have a seat in our special observer's chair.

We ask that all who enter our environment practice using quiet voices, walking slowly, and respecting one another. A peaceful classroom is the foundation for concentration and focus.

If you have any questions for any of the instructors or administrators, please leave your name and number (or e-mail address) on the attached form, and one of us will get back to you as soon as possible.

We invite you to come back to visit often!

Thank you for your interest in City Garden and for your commitment to helping improve the lives of children in St. Louis.

Sincerely,

Nicole Evans  
Principal

Christie Huck  
Executive Director

Darcell Butler  
Montessori Instructional Coordinator

Anne Lacey  
Montessori Instructional Coordinator

## City Garden Montessori School Classroom Observation Guide

### As you enter and settle in:

- Enter as silently and unobtrusively as possible.
- Sit in the observer's chair and quietly observe.
- Try not to engage in conversation with students, since they know their responsibility is for purposeful work.
- Try to be aware of the look of the room, the shelves and numerous materials, the presence of flowers, plants, artwork by the children or guides.
- What are the adults doing?
- Where is work done?
- Are the students all doing the same thing?
- How are students using the materials?
- Is there productive and purposeful work?
- What kinds of ground rules are noticeable?
- What kinds of interactions or interventions occur?

Notes and Observations:

## City Garden Montessori School Montessori Inquiry Form

Please use this form to communicate any questions or observations you have, after your visit in our Montessori classroom.

Name:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Classroom you visited today:  
[Or Guide's name]

Purpose of Your Visit Today/How you learned about City Garden:

Questions/ Observations for the Montessori Guide:

*Please return this form to the front office, and our guide or one of our staff members will respond to you as soon as possible.*

*Thank you for visiting City Garden Montessori School!*

# **City Garden Montessori School**

## **Student Rights and Responsibilities**

At City Garden Montessori School we believe all students have rights and responsibilities.

### **Rights**

*We believe all students have the right to . . .*

*A peaceful community*

*Learn*

*Be treated with respect*

*Voice opinions or comments respectfully*

*A clean and safe school*

*Build friendships through work and play*

### **Responsibilities**

*In order to ensure the rights of all we must . . .*

*Be responsible for our own actions*

*Put forth effort*

*Show our personal best*

*Respect materials and environment*

*Treat others with respect*

*Respect other people's differences*

*Cooperate with each other*

*Use good manners and show courtesy*

## **Homework Guidelines**

Guides assign homework that is meaningful to the child, relevant to the curriculum, and of a reasonable amount. Homework varies from grade to grade and from guide to guide. Following is the approximate amount of time that should be allotted for homework each week:

	Weekly Total	Daily Minimum
Early Childhood(Reading nightly)	100 minutes	20 minutes
Kindergarten(Reading nightly)	100 minutes	20 minutes
*Grade 1 - 3	50 - 150 minutes	10 - 30 minutes
*Grades 4 - 6	200 - 300 minutes	40 - 60 minutes
*Grades 7 - 8:	350 - 400 minutes	70 - 80 minutes

\*In addition to the regularly assigned homework, all students are expected to read or be read to for 20 - 30 minutes per night.

## **Student Sleep Expectations**

<b><u>Age</u></b>	<b><u>Total Sleep</u></b>	<b><u>Recommended by American Academy of Pediatrics Bed Time</u></b>
<b><u>4 yrs</u></b>	<b><u>11 ½ hours</u></b>	<b><u>7:00 pm</u></b>
<b><u>5 yrs</u></b>	<b><u>11 hours</u></b>	<b><u>7:30 pm</u></b>
<b><u>6 yrs</u></b>	<b><u>10 ¾ hours</u></b>	<b><u>7:45 pm</u></b>
<b><u>7 yrs</u></b>	<b><u>10 ½ hours</u></b>	<b><u>8:00 pm</u></b>
<b><u>8 yrs</u></b>	<b><u>10 ¼ hours</u></b>	<b><u>8:15 pm</u></b>
<b><u>9 yrs</u></b>	<b><u>10 hours</u></b>	<b><u>8:30 pm</u></b>
<b><u>10 yrs</u></b>	<b><u>9 ¾ hours</u></b>	<b><u>8:45 pm</u></b>
<b><u>11 yrs</u></b>	<b><u>9 ½ hours</u></b>	<b><u>9:00 pm</u></b>
<b><u>12 - 13 yrs</u></b>	<b><u>9 ¼ hours</u></b>	<b><u>9:15 pm</u></b>

## **Parent Education Let's Talk Montessori Seminars**

Parent Education Seminars are mandatory for all parents at City Garden Montessori School. The classes are designed to address the need for of our City Garden parent community in becoming knowledgeable about the Montessori Theory of Development and Philosophy. Montessori Guides share knowledge that is intended to help parents

## **Technology Guidelines**

The Technology Guidelines apply to all technology resources at City Garden, including, but not limited to computers, telephones, video equipment, copy machines, and data storage devices.

- Duplication of copyrighted software is prohibited with the exception of the creation of a single archival copy, made in compliance with the terms of the applicable license agreement.
- School computers are not used to illegally duplicate copyrighted.
- The school requires written permission to use the original software and its back-ups simultaneously.
- The use or storage of illegally duplicated software, however obtained, is prohibited in any City Garden associated technology product.
- Technology users are familiar with and comply with applicable requirements in software license agreements and copyright law.
- Individuals who violate the Technology Guidelines at City Garden are subject to immediate discipline up to and including discharge and expulsion.

### **Acceptable Use Policy**

Internet access for students and guides are available throughout the building. Our goal in providing this service is to promote educational excellence and global education by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, and communication.

Along with access to computers and people all over the world comes the availability of material that may not be considered educationally valuable. We have taken precautions to restrict access to controversial materials by installing an internet security and content filtering appliance and by teaching students about safe and responsible use of this powerful electronic tool.

### **Safety precautions include:**

- Never identify yourself by name, age, sex or location.
- Never exchange street addresses or telephone numbers.
- Never use inappropriate language or symbols of affection.
- Report to a guide any requests for information that would identify you.
- Report inappropriate language of anything that makes you feel uncomfortable to a guide.

### **Acceptable Use Guidelines:**

- Respect copyright laws.
- Verify accuracy of information and/or check sources.
- Become an informed and critical consumer.
- Students should only use technology to complete tasks or assignments that are assigned by a guide at City Garden.

- Respect others by never logging on as another person or intentionally obtaining copies or modifying files, passwords, or data that belong to anyone else.
- Do not download excessive information, monopolize resources or install any applications or files without proper permission from a guide or the Technology Coordinator.
- Intentionally damaging, vandalizing, hacking, or destroying technological systems or equipment will be considered vandalism and will be subject to immediate disciplines, including discharge or expulsion.
- City Garden technology may not be used for harassment or obscene or illegal purposes.
- City Garden technology may not be used for commercial purposes or advertising.
- Class accounts, if used, must occur under the supervision of the sponsoring guide.
- Students should not conduct e-mail, chatting, or instant-messaging activity on City Garden computers without prior guide approval and supervision.
- Respect the integrity of the system. Unauthorized access to the City Garden server or other networked computers is not permitted.

Students who have agreed to this policy are expected to adhere to it at all times. The use of our internet connection is a privilege, not a right. Computer use is limited to school-related activities and assignments. City Garden reserves the right to monitor computer usage, including, without limitations, sites visited, and e-mails sent and received. The undersigned hereby consents to such monitoring and acknowledges that s/he has no expectations of privacy in connection with his/her use of City Garden's technology. Violations of policy or inappropriate use will result in cancellation of those privileges and may jeopardize successful completion of internet-related assignments or class work. Violations may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from school.

### **Telephone Use**

Students and parents are to adhere to the following regarding school and cell phone use:

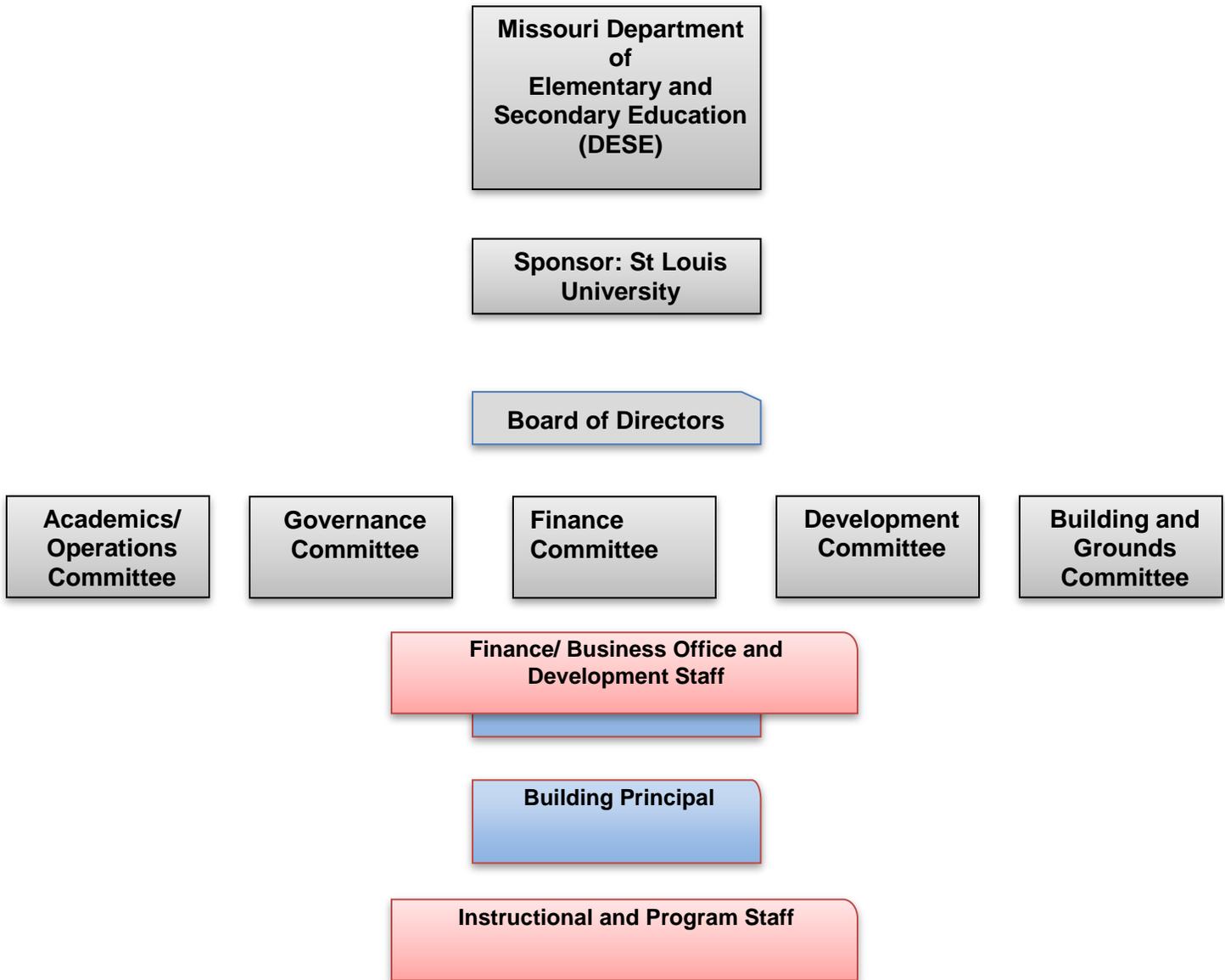
#### **Telephone Messages**

Should a parent/guardian need to contact a student, he or she should contact the Administrative Office. Upon approval of the Principal, the Administrative Assistant will deliver the message to the student. The Administrative Office will make every effort to cooperate in getting emergency messages to students. Requests for such messages should come from parents and must be kept to essential or unusual circumstances.

#### **Cell Phone**

Students are not permitted to use cell phone in the school building at any time. If a student brings a cell phone to school, it must be stored with the classroom guide or in the Administrative Office and retrieved at the end of the day.

## City Garden Montessori School Governance Structure



## **DESE**

City Garden is ultimately accountable to the State of Missouri for our academic achievement and outcomes, use of public funds, governance and legal compliance.

## **SLU**

City Garden is accountable to Saint Louis University for ensuring that we are compliant with everything that is contained in our chartering document. This includes academic outcomes, curriculum implementation/ adherence to the Montessori philosophy, program outcomes and implementation, parent engagement, fiscal management and responsibility, board governance and management, legal compliance and operational compliance.

## **Board of Directors**

City Garden is technically its own small “school district,” or Local Education Agency, as well as a nonprofit agency. The Board of Directors is the ultimate legal and fiscal authority for City Garden Montessori School, as both an LEA and a nonprofit organization.

The Board’s duty is to guide the mission and vision of the school, to ensure that City Garden is keeping to its mission and vision, that the school has adequate resources available to support and implement the mission and vision, that the school’s resources are appropriately managed and distributed, to set and approve policy that supports the structure and mission of the school and to safeguard the school in regards to legal and political matters that impact the school’s operation and/ or ability to implement the mission. The Board does not interact or oversee the daily operations of the school, but rather guides and makes decisions regarding “overarching” issues that impact the school and organization as a whole. For example, last year the Board made the determination to institutionally support Montessori training, and to establish a salary scale for instructional staff, in order to better meet our mission and vision.

## **Committees of the Board**

The monthly board meetings are the regular, official business meetings of the board, where decisions are made and committee reports are given. The bulk of the board work occurs in committee meetings. City Garden’s board currently has the following working committees:

### ***Academics/ Operations Committee:***

*NOTE: This Committee is currently under development/ revision, as the Chairperson has recently resigned, and because Nicole, our chief academic leader, has been out. It will resume its work mid-Fall, 2014.*

The Academics/ Operations Committee is responsible for ensuring that City Garden is fully implementing its mission as a Montessori school committed to academic excellence and racial and economic diversity. The duties of the Academics/ Operations Committee include:

- Approving annual academic and program goals and benchmarks—ensuring that City Garden’s Montessori philosophy and curriculum are implemented with fidelity while also meeting state standards and the common core curriculum.
- Reviewing and monitoring academic and program outcomes, including monthly reports regarding school-wide attendance, school demographics and special education services.

- Analyzing school data and programming with an anti-bias/ anti-racist lens, ensuring that programming supports and enhances City Garden’s school-wide commitment to being anti-biased/ anti-racist, and that we are working steadily toward closing the achievement gap.
- Establishing and approving policies regarding curriculum, professional development, school operations and school programming that help City Garden fulfill its mission and vision.
- Reviewing and recommending to the board school-wide changes that impact curriculum, instruction, program and/ or operations.
- Providing oversight and support to the school principal and instructional staff.

***Governance Committee:***

The Governance Committee is responsible for ensuring that City Garden, and its board, are effectively governed. The duties of the Governance Committee include:

- Establishing and recommending board policies and procedures.
- Reviewing and updating legal documents, such as the organizational Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Conflict of Interest policy, the school’s Charter, the school’s Accountability Plan with Saint Louis University.
- Ensuring that the board is in compliance with all federal, state and local mandates, such as the Missouri Sunshine Law, Missouri Ethics Commission requirements, submitting the annual audit, the annual 990 report to the IRS, the Annual Secretary of the Board Report, etc.
- Establishing and recommending effective board and committee recruitment policies and procedures, and ensuring that these policies and procedures are followed.
- Recruiting and vetting new board and committee members and nominating board leadership annually.
- Orienting new board members.
- Overseeing board professional development.
- Conducting board, and board leadership, evaluations.
- Ensuring effective communication among board members and from the board to the school community and the external community.

***Finance Committee:***

The Finance Committee ensures organizational fiscal responsibility and accountability. The duties of the Finance Committee include:

- Reviewing and approving the school’s budget. The annual budget is first drafted in February of the prior year and approved by June 30, for the fiscal year that begins July 1. The budget is then amended quarterly; the Finance Committee works with the executive director and the accountant to revise the budget based on anticipated needs and actual revenues and expenditures.
- Reviewing/ monitoring revenues and expenditures. Each month the Finance Committee reviews all transactions in detail (revenue that has come in as well as expenditures) bank statements and bank reconciliations, as well as monthly financial statements and cash flow statements.
- Establishing and recommending fiscal policies and procedures, such as internal and external controls (checks and balances), banking policy, how financial statements are prepared, investment policies, etc.

- Monitoring the annual fiscal/ organizational audit and preparation of the 990 to the IRS.
- Providing oversight and support to the executive director and the finance/ business office staff.

***Development Committee:***

The Development Committee is responsible for guiding and overseeing resource development for the school. The duties of the Development Committee include:

- Reviewing and approving the school’s annual development plan. The development plan is drafted in conjunction with the school’s annual budget and is approved by June 30, for the fiscal year that begins July 1. The plan includes goals and strategies for bringing in the resources needed to meet the school’s financial needs.
- Reviewing/ monitoring resource development outcomes. The Development Committee receives a monthly development report, cash flow statement and a report from development staff regarding progress toward meeting organizational goals.
- Establishing/ recommending policies and procedures regarding resource development.
- Overseeing the implementation of resource development activities/ programming, including parent giving, major donor cultivation, corporate and business contributions, the annual gala, events, communications, stewardship and tracking of donations and donor information.
- (Beginning in 2014-15) reviewing and approving an annual report that will be shared with the school community and the public.
- Providing oversight and support to the executive director, director of development and development staff.

***Building and Grounds Committee:***

The Building and Grounds Committee is responsible for ensuring that City Garden has adequate/ effective facilities and grounds to implement the school’s mission and programming. The duties of the Building and Grounds Committee include:

- Establishing and recommending annual facilities planning that supports program implementation.
- Reviewing and monitoring legal matters pertaining to facilities needs, i.e., lease agreements, occupancy requirements, warranty agreements, liability matters, etc.
- Developing, reviewing and recommending any significant changes to the building or grounds, i.e., design and build-out of the outdoor space, the kitchen space, etc.
- Reviewing and monitoring building and grounds maintenance.
- Evaluating and re-bidding vendor contracts as needed.
- Developing and monitoring organizational commitment to environmental sustainability as it pertains to the built environment and operational practices.
- Developing ongoing maintenance/capital improvement plan.
- Providing oversight and support to the executive director and facilities staff.

## **Executive Staff**

### ***Executive Director:***

The Executive Director is responsible for overseeing the organization as a whole. The Executive Director is directly responsible to the Board, acting as a liaison between the school and the Board, working in coordination with the Board in guiding the mission and vision of the school, and helping to inform the Board's decision-making. The Executive Director is the only employee the Board hires, fires and evaluates.

The Executive Director is responsible for overall management of the organization, including strategic planning, fiscal management, resource development, legal matters, human resources, external relationships (i.e., state representatives, local political and civic leaders, strategic partnerships, major funders, etc.) and public relations. The Executive Director oversees the School Principal, as well as the Director of Development, Executive Assistant, Business Office/ Facilities Coordinator and Accountant.

### ***School Principal:***

The School Principal is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the mission and vision of the school.

The School Principal is the instructional/ program leader and is responsible for management of the day-to-day operations of the school, including hiring, firing and evaluating instructional and program staff, overseeing curriculum and its implementation, assessment and accountability, professional development, parent communication and parent education, family support, discipline and school policies and procedures.

## **Additional Developments in 2014-15:**

### ***ABAR Board Committee***

In 2014-15, City Garden will establish a new board committee focused on guiding our commitment to be an Anti-Biased/ Anti-Racist institution.

### ***Affordable Housing Task Force***

We will also launch a task force that will look at access to housing in the neighborhoods we serve, and determine how City Garden might facilitate education about and advocacy strategies around ensuring that affordable housing becomes increasingly available in our neighborhoods.

### ***Strategic Plan***

City Garden's current strategic plan was designed to be in effect until 2015. This fiscal/ academic year, we will review progress on our current strategic plan, and lay the groundwork to develop a new strategic plan for the next several years of City Garden's growth and development.