

Children's Garden Montessori **Parent Handbook**

Mission Statement

Our mission at Children's Garden Montessori is to nurture the blossoming child's natural formation of self by responding to their limitless wonder.

Children's Garden Montessori School provides children 18 months to 6 years old an environment of classrooms and teachers that

- Is orderly, because children appreciate and need order,
- Is respectful, so children treat each other, themselves and the materials with respect,
- Is calm, so children have the opportunity to concentrate,
- Models constructive conflict resolution, so children learn peaceful problem solving,
- Assists and supports children to be as independent as possible,
- Is an authentic Montessori school; the children are presented with lessons and materials on language, math, geography, science, art and music as they are ready.

Philosophy Statement

Our curriculum is based on the fully prepared learning environment which provides a teacher trained to observe, interact with, and present children with information and presentations of new materials, a diverse set of Montessori materials, activities, and experiences, a schedule that provides long blocks of uninterrupted learning time, along with individual, small group and whole class learning activities, a classroom that fosters appropriate social interaction and auto-learning, and clear ground rules that encourage children to respect themselves, others and the environment. Adults in the classroom role-model courtesy facilitate exploration and independent choices on the part of the child, promote children collaborating together on activities or projects, and encourage children taking responsibility for their actions and their environment.

Program Information

A Montessori education is an established philosophy and method originated by Dr. Maria Montessori in the first half of the 20th century. It was her belief that the goal of early childhood education should be to cultivate the child's own natural desire to learn. She created an approach to education that would best enable children to develop their learning abilities, independence, and initiative, and stimulate within the child a genuine love of learning.

We have three classrooms: the west and east classrooms for children aged three to six years old and the middle classroom for children 18 months to three years old. Learning takes place naturally from the prepared environment, the teachers, the assistants, and the other children. The materials are designed to attract the interest and meet the developmental needs of each child and to integrate the child's expanding knowledge. Classrooms are bright and cheerful and are structured to enable a child to explore within his or her abilities. The Montessori materials have a "control of error" inherent in their design or presentation, so that children can work independently and learn through their own efforts. All activities are directed toward helping children develop positive attitudes about themselves, their world, and a lifetime of learning.

Children's Garden Montessori School is a non-profit corporation, operated by an administrator and directed by a Board of Directors. It is licensed by the state of New Mexico.

How to reach the Director

Joan Shankin Children's Garden Montessori School
710 Old Las Vegas Highway Santa Fe New Mexico 87505
505 466-1272 childrensgardensantafe@gmail.com website: www.childrensgardensantafe.com

Universal Childcare

Children's Garden Montessori accepts Universal Childcare funding for all families who qualify.

The Role of the Adult in the Montessori Classroom

You are welcome to enter your child's classroom at any time. The classroom is the children's work place. Adults must be respectful, unobtrusive, and quiet, please. Allow the teacher to keep his or her attention on the children. If you would like to conference with the teacher, please do so when the teacher is not supervising children.

Lunch and Snack Guidelines

One of the primary values we have at Children's Garden Montessori is to support children to be independent. With this in mind, please send their lunch items in a lunchbox and in containers that they can open and close by themselves. Please send three or four nutritional, ready-to-eat finger foods and include a protein food, (e.g. carrot sticks, cheese cubes, crackers, grapes, sandwiches, apple slices, egg.) Avoid foods that your child cannot manage independently. Please send reusable containers. Consider the environment and help us reduce the amount of trash and uneaten food thrown away. Please send a cloth napkin. Please only send water to drink. Please do not include any item that has sugar as the first or primary ingredient.

Food Allergies

If your child has food allergies or a special diet, please indicate on your child's profile on Brightwheel.

Daily Schedule for East and West Classes

7:45 to 8:15 a.m.	Early Arrival
8:15 to 9:00 a.m.	Playground
9:00 to 9:15 a.m.	Circle Time
9:15 to 11:00 a.m.	Independent work time and individual lessons
11:00 to 11:30 a.m.	Circle Time
11:30 to 12:15 p.m.	Lunch
12:15 to 1:00 p.m.	Playground, Morning children are picked up
1:00 to 2:45 p.m.	Naptime for those who sleep
1:00 to 2:45 p.m.	Rest time, then independent work time for those who don't sleep
2:45 to 3:15 p.m.	Playground, Full Day children are picked up
3:15 to 5:30 p.m.	Aftercare

Daily Schedule for Middle Room

7:45 to 8:15 a.m.	Early Arrival
9:00 to 9:30 a.m.	Playground
9:30 to 10:00 a.m.	Snack
10:00 to 11:30 a.m.	Classroom work and toileting
11:30 to 12:00 p.m.	Lunch
12:00 to 12:30 p.m.	Cleaning up and toileting
12:30 to 1:00 p.m.	Playground, Morning children are picked up
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.	Naptime
3:00 to 3:15 p.m.	Full Day children are picked up.
3:15 to 5:30 p.m.	Aftercare

Things to Bring on the Your Child's First Day of School

East and West Classes –Everything should be clearly marked with your child's name: water bottle, lunch, backpack or tote bag, and two seasonally appropriate changes of clothes. For children who will sleep at naptime (as opposed to children who will simply rest for 15 minutes in the afternoon) a small blanket and/or pillow that can fit in one of our 14" x 14" canvas bags, and sunscreen, if necessary. (The children will apply this before we go outside in the afternoon, with teacher support.) In winter, send hat, coat, gloves, and snow pants, if necessary, and indoor shoes or slippers (functional, non-slip soles, no giant/character slippers). Vaccination records.

Middle Room –Everything should be clearly marked with your child's name: water bottle, lunch, backpack or tote bag, and two seasonally appropriate changes of clothes: shirts, pants, socks, and underwear, if applicable, diapers, wipes, diaper cream and sunscreen. For children who stay through naptime, send items that are comforting for your child. In winter send hat, coat, gloves and snow pants, if necessary, and indoor shoes or slippers (functional, non-slip soles, no giant/character slippers). Vaccination Records.

Please be On Time!

To get the most out of the school day, please make sure your child arrives in time for circle. Being punctual at arrival and dismissal times is important for a child's sense of security. If your child stays until 5:30 p.m., please arrive before 5:20 p.m. It takes 10 minutes for your child to say goodbye and collect his or her belongings.

Arrivals and Dismissals

Quick drop offs and pick ups are very effective. Please do not linger at these times. When we supervise your children we give them our full attention. When you are picking up or dropping off your child, please give your full attention to him or her. Please refrain from using your cell phone during this transition time. Arriving children are to be accompanied by a parent to a teacher. Children may be picked up only by adults listed in their file. Please sign your children in and out when you drop them off and pick them up.

Vaccines Save Lives

Children's Garden Montessori must have the current immunization records or approved exemptions for all enrolled children on or before their first day of school. The schedule and requirements can be found at www.health.state.nm.us/immunize. This needs to be updated each time your child receives more vaccinations.

To get an exemption, per state law, you will need to provide to the health department and to Children's Garden Montessori: (1) A certificate of a duly licensed physician stating that the physical condition of the child is such that immunization would seriously endanger the life or health of the child; or (2) Affidavits or written affirmation from an officer of a recognized religious denomination that such child's parents or guardians are bona fide members of a denomination whose religious teaching requires reliance upon prayer or spiritual means alone for healing; (3) Affidavits or written affirmation from the parent or legal guardian that the parent's religious beliefs, held either individually or jointly with others, do not permit the administration of vaccine or other immunizing agent. We have the same requirements as Santa Fe Public Schools regarding vaccinations.

If there is an outbreak of a disease for which there is a vaccine, families who have opted out of vaccinations with an exemption will need to keep their children at home, as required by the Public Health Department. There will be no refund of tuition.

Ages and Stages Questionnaire

The first five years of life are very important for your child because this time sets the stage for success in school and later life. Maria Montessori said “The greatest development is achieved during the first years of life, and therefore it is then that the greatest care should be taken. If this is done, then the child does not become a burden; he will reveal himself as the greatest marvel of nature.”

The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) is a screening and developmental monitoring program that we have found to be very useful at Children’s Garden Montessori. It does not take very much time, and it is fun to do with your child at home. If you prefer not to complete this survey at home, then you may sign a release, and the teachers will complete the survey with your child at school.

Although we are a Montessori school first, we are also an ECECD 5 Star rated school (FOCUS), and committed to providing a program that is accessible to all families. This star rating allows us to open our school to state subsidized families, who otherwise might not be able to afford a Montessori program. This is foundational to our mission.

One of the requirements of the 5 Star rating is that we present parents with this, or a similar self-assessment, of their child's developmental progress. This information stays in house, and is only meant to be a screening tool that helps families to determine whether they may need additional services. We do not share this information with anyone.

Notification of absence

Please notify us if your child will not be coming to school due to illness, injury, vacation, or other reason on Brightwheel.

Snow Days and School Closures

We follow the Santa Fe Public School’s decisions about weather related late openings, early closings and cancellation of school. As soon as we know, we will email all parents. If the Santa Fe Public Schools call for a two hour delay, we will open at 10 a.m. Any delay more than two hours will be considered a cancellation for our school.

Conferences

We have conferences in November, March and July.

Naps

Please send a small blanket, pillow, and soft silent toy to keep at school for your napping child. The children who rest in the afternoon do not need these items.

Appropriate Dress for Children and A Change of Clothing

Kids play and get messy, kids are artistic and get messy, and kids explore and get messy. Please let your child dress in clothes that can get messy, too. Children should wear comfortable clothing which they can manage by themselves. We play outdoors, so your child should wear shoes that he or she can run and play in. In the fall and winter, we still play outside almost every day.

Children should have warm coats, hats, gloves or mittens and warm shoes or boots in the fall and winter. Please label these with your child’s name. Please bring an extra change of clothes for your child. In case of spills or accidents, children will then be able to change clothes. When the weather turns cooler, bring in a second warmer set of spare clothes to trade out. Please label these with your child’s name.

Sunscreen in the summertime

Apply sunscreen, if needed, before you arrive at school. The teachers will assist the children to re-apply sunscreen after lunch.

Dual Language Learners

To be inclusive, we support all dual language learners. For example, we promote children's home language (Spanish), while supporting English language development. We will communicate with families in their home language (Spanish), or with a Sign Language interpreter at parent teacher conferences, for deaf parents. We provide resources and materials for families who speak in languages other than English.

Trial Period

Occasionally the school may find that the program is not meeting the needs of a particular child. In a few cases, some children may demonstrate that they are not developmentally ready to be in preschool. They may show lack of interest in developmentally appropriate materials, be overly concerned about separating from their parents, or act fearful or aggressive towards other children. In this situation, we will ask for a two-week trial period for your child. If he or she does not become more comfortable, we will ask you to withdraw your child. Your unused tuition will be refunded. Advance notice and reason for dismissal will always be given to parents.

30 Days' Notice of Withdrawal

If you decide to withdraw your child, for any reason, please give the school 30 days notice. If 30 days notice is not given, tuition for the month is still due.

Children's Garden Montessori reserves the right to ask a family to withdraw a child if the behavior of the child or the parent is a safety concern. This can be done without notice if necessary, or with 30 days' notice, at the discretion of the director. Our goal is to ensure the safety of the children, teachers and families in our school community.

IEP / ISFP

If a child has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), and the parent chooses to share that with the school, we can support that child by working on particular skills. In the event that a child requires a lower teacher student ratio that we can provide, we will refer the family to appropriate outside resources.

Guidance Policy

Behavioral problems shall be handled with the cooperation of the teachers and the parents of the child. Teachers will not withhold food, snacks or activities from children as punishment.

Aggressive Behavior Policy

If a child exhibits aggressive behavior towards other children, the teachers will communicate with the parents and together come up with a plan to ensure all the children at the school are safe.

Tax Identification Number

Children's Garden Montessori School's tax ID number is 20-4247751.

Helping your Child Prepare for Preschool

Many young children look forward to being with other children and engaging in the fun and stimulating activities they've seen on their prior visits to the school, but many also feel some unhappiness at saying goodbye to parents. In order to make your child's transition from home to preschool as comfortable as possible, the following suggestions should help you to prepare your child.

1. Relax! Remember that both you and the school feel your child is “ready” to be part of a program out of the home.
2. Talk to your child in the same way about preschool as you would about an exciting place to go or person to visit.
3. Make any choice about “going to school” your decision NOT your child’s as this can lead to endless negotiations and an overall attitude about “school” that is undesirable.
4. Please walk your child to the teacher meeting children and say “Goodbye” so your child can focus on the start of the school day without the uncertainty of not knowing when you will be leaving.
5. Talk over any concerns with the preschool teacher without delay. First thing in the morning, when she is busy greeting children and preparing for the class, is not the best time, but a request for a phone call that day or a brief conference that week can be arranged.

Health Records

The school needs a Registration Form on file for each child. This should be updated annually, as well as current immunization records.

Children Becoming Ill at School

Children who become ill while at school will be brought to a room where they can rest and the parents will be called to pick them up.

Medications

The teachers are authorized to administer medicine only if accompanied by a signed and dated note from the parent and the container is labeled with the correct prescription. Please complete a medication release form (from the director) and hand this directly to one of the teachers. No medication of any kind should be put in children’s lunch boxes.

Sick Child Policy

To protect all of the children and staff we ask that you not send your child to school when he or she is sick. Sometimes it is difficult to tell if your child is not well enough to come to school, so here are some suggested guidelines. Keep your child home if he or she has had a fever (100 degrees or more) within the last 24 hours, or has had diarrhea or vomited in the last 24 hours.

Emergency Procedures

In case of emergency requiring evacuation of the building or the playground, the following procedures will be followed:

1. Children will be alerted by the smoke alarm sirens, and will follow the teachers in an orderly fashion (walking in line) through the playground and across the road to a parking space.
2. The last teacher will check the building to ensure all people are out.
3. The teachers will call use the Rave Panic Button app to notify 911.
4. Parents will be notified if children need to be picked up early.
5. Children will return to the classrooms once it is safe to do so.

Fire Drills will be held once a month.

Emergency Preparedness Drills (lockdown or evacuations) will be held quarterly.

Safety Rules

Children must be accompanied by a parent at all times while along the road or in the front garden. Children may not engage in any games or behavior likely to result in an injury to themselves or others (e.g. hitting kicking, tripping, tackling others, throwing rocks or running with sticks). Children must walk while inside the building. Jewelry, toys, and small objects should not be brought to school as they can be lost or put in the mouth by the child.

Injuries

Parents will be notified if their child sustains an injury that results in crying, bruising, or bleeding, or if their child appears ill or fatigued. A child responsible for the injury of another will be asked to assist the responding staff member in caring for the injured child.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Children's Garden Montessori admits children of any race, creed, or origin and does not discriminate in any of its policies or programs.

Confidentiality Policy

Children's Garden Montessori will keep all personal information about the students and families that attend the school confidential.

Concerns

Parents are advised to direct any concerns (concerning children, teachers or other families) to the director of the school. She will meet with the parents to determine an acceptable resolution. If the complaint is regarding the director, a parent may contact a member of the Board of Directors. The current Board of Directors and their contact numbers are available to parents upon request.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

Staff members who observe children at school with unexplained marks on them (burns, black eyes, bites, cuts, etc.), or hear children describe sexual conduct or make sexual comments inappropriate for their age, should investigate the cause by talking to the child and the child's parents. Staff should also notify the administrator of their concerns. If child abuse is suspected, the administrator will contact ECECD and report the concerns.

Implementation of child abuse and neglect policies and procedures is a necessary component of child abuse and neglect prevention strategies in a program or facility that serves people under the age of eighteen. Child abuse and neglect policies and procedures should include (but are not limited to) the following:

- A statement that the facility has a responsibility to prevent child abuse and neglect of children enrolled in the program or facility.
- Definitions of child abuse and neglect.
- Reporting Requirements.
- The Department of Children Youth and Families Protective Services Division phone number to call for reporting abuse or neglect is 1-855-333 SAFE (7233).
- Program staff responsibilities should they witness, or become aware of, abuse or neglect of a child enrolled in the program or facility.
- Administrative actions (which support zero tolerance for abuse and neglect) to be implemented should there be an allegation that a staff member abused or neglected a child.
- Information that program staff are protected by law from discrimination or retaliation for reporting abuse or neglect.
- Program staff training in (at a minimum annually) the facility's abuse and neglect policy, prevention and detection of child abuse and neglect, and reporting requirements as a mandated reporter.
- Documentation requirements and records to be maintained.
- Provisions for informing parents of the facility's abuse and neglect policy and procedures.

Our program staff have a responsibility to prevent child abuse and neglect of any children involved in our center.

1. Definition:

Child Abuse includes:

- Any non-accidental physical or mental injury (i.e. shaking, beating, burning)
- Any form of sexual abuse (i.e. sexual exploitation)
- Neglect of a child (i.e. failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, education, mental care, appropriate supervision)
- Emotional abuse (i.e. excessive belittling, berating, or teasing which impairs the child's psychological growth)
- At risk behavior (i.e. placing a child in a situation which might endanger him by abuse or neglect).

Child Abuse is defined as:

A child who has had

- Non-accidental physical injuries inflicted upon him
- Injuries which are at variance with the history given of them
- Is in a condition, which is the result of maltreatment, such as, but not limited to, malnutrition, sexual exploitation, and deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment or cruel punishment.

Child neglect is defined as:

A child who has been:

- Abandoned
- Denied proper care and attention physically, educationally, emotionally or morally
- Allowed to live under circumstances, conditions or associations injurious to his well-being

2. Program staff responsibilities:

As childcare providers we are mandated by law to report **any suspicion** that a child is being abused, neglected or at risk.

3. Specifics on reporting a suspected case of abuse or neglect - Call the Department of Children and Families (open 24 hours a day) at 1855-333-SAFE (7233).

- The reporter's name is required but may be kept confidential.

Information needed:

- Name of child/Date of birth
- Address of child
- Phone number of child
- Name of parents or guardians
- Address of parents or guardians
- Phone number of parents or guardians
- Relevant information such as: physical or behavioral indicators, nature and extent of injury, maltreatment or neglect
- Exact description of what the reporter has observed
- Time and date of incident
- Information about previous injuries, if any
- Circumstances under which reporter learned of abuse
- Name of any person suspected of causing injury
- Any information reporter believes would be helpful
- Any action taken to help or treat the child
- Seek medical attention for the child – if needed

Mandated reporters must report orally to CYFD or a law enforcement agency within 12 hours of suspecting that a child has been abused or neglected. Within 48 hours of making the report, the mandated reporter must submit a written report CYFD.

Program staff are protected by law from discrimination or retaliation for reporting suspected abuse or neglect.

All phone calls to CYFD shall be documented and kept on file at the center. A copy of all statements from staff and CYFD shall also be kept on file.

4. The management of this program supports a zero tolerance for abuse and neglect and will implement immediate action should there be an allegation that a program staff member abused or neglected a child.

The administration will protect the child, including immediate notification of a parent or guardian, once there is an allegation of abuse or neglect of a child in our program.

Any program staff member accused of abuse or neglect may be immediately removed from his or her position until CYFD's investigation is completed. Based on whether the allegations were substantiated or not, the program staff would either be dismissed from his/her position or allowed to return to work.

5. Program staff training:

Program staff will be required to attend an annual program staff mandated reporter training. This training will focus on the steps for reporting suspected abuse and neglect, the role of a mandated reporter, and the recognition and prevention of child maltreatment, abuse and neglect. All new program staff will be trained in these procedures prior to their start in the classroom.

6. Provisions for informing families of abuse and neglect policy:

A copy of this policy will be included in our parent information packet, and each family will be given a copy upon enrollment.

When an accusation of abuse or neglect by a program staff member is made, the Director must immediately inform the parents or guardians that a report has been made to CYFD. Health care officials may need to talk to a child's parents to access the cause of the child's injuries and offer support and guidance.

Corporal Punishment

Children's Garden Montessori School prohibits the use of corporal punishment.

Licensed and Inspected by the Early Childhood Education and Care Department.

Philosophy Statement

Referenced to the Guiding Principles for the Full Participation of Young Children in New Mexico's Early Learning System. This is on the last page of the Parent Handbook.

Children's Garden Montessori School, a not-for-profit preschool, for children ages 18 months to 6 years old, follows the Montessori philosophy which is based on the premise that children have sensitive learning periods during these ages, and that each child learns at his or her individual pace. It is during these early years that each child's individual gifts and abilities will be encouraged and supported to his or her maximum potential. (1, 2, 5)

Our curriculum is based on the fully prepared learning environment which provides

- Teachers trained to observe, interact with, and present children with information and presentations of new materials, (3)
- Teachers who facilitate exploration and independent choices on the part of the child, (12),
- Teachers who role-model courtesy,
- A diverse set of Montessori materials, activities, and experiences,
- A schedule that provides long blocks of uninterrupted learning time, along with individual, small group and whole class learning activities, and
- Clear ground rules that encourage children to respect themselves, others and the environment. (12)

The goals of our curriculum are to help each child develop

- A positive self-image and to encourage in each child a love of learning as a foundation for a lifetime of independent thought and action,
- An awareness and understanding of the environment through play and individual exploration, (3)
- Improved communication skills, perceptual awareness and motor coordination,
- Support for dual language learners, as one adult in each classroom is bilingual in Spanish and English, (4, 15,16)
- The ability to think quantitatively, to understand the structure of the number system and the logic of mathematical operations, and
- Aesthetic values through experience in art, music and other creative and cultural experiences.

Professional Qualifications

Lead Teachers have received Montessori training from sources that are nationally recognized by AMS, AMI, NAMC or MACTE. Teachers and assistants have taken the required courses and training required by ECECD and FOCUS, and ongoing professional development. (17) Teachers and assistants are compensated based upon their term of employment, certifications, work performance and education. (16) Our teachers and assistants reflect the diversity of the community. (16)

Continuous Quality Improvement

Children's Garden Montessori is committed to continually evaluating and improving upon our current program services through research and continuing education regarding our work with families.(12,13,14) Therefore, all children will have access to a variety of services and supports that are inclusive and respectful of each child's experiences, culture, beliefs, abilities and circumstances. (4, 6, 15)

Inclusive Practices

We follow a non-discriminatory policy. We accept children and families of all races, creeds, social and economic status. (4, 5, 6, 9, 10) We will coordinate and work with families and outside resources in the community to include necessary modifications to ensure full participation. (6, 9, 10) With parental approval, we will use the ASQ (Ages and Stages Questionnaire) to determine the individual needs of each child. (6) When necessary and with parental consent, we will participate fully in the IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan)/IEP (Individual Education Plan) process. (6, 8, 9)

Guiding Principles for the Full participation of Young Children in New Mexico's Early Learning System

We believe that...

1. Every child has unique gifts and abilities that are to celebrated and nurtured.
2. The early years hold enormous promise for every child to reach his or her full potential.
3. Every child learns within the context of relationships and through playful interaction with their environment.
4. Every child and his or her family deserve equitable access to appropriate services and supports that acknowledge their uniqueness and enable them to reach their full potential.

Therefore, we are committed to...

5. Valuing and embracing all children and their families.
6. Involving families and communities as partners and decision-makers.
7. Overcoming biases to build trust and establish collaborative partnerships that benefit children, their families, and the professionals who work with them.
8. Providing choice, flexibility, and continuity of services and supports for families within communities.

9. Making a variety of services and support available so all children have access to and can participate in opportunities that are both respectful of responsive to their family experiences, culture, beliefs, abilities, and circumstances.
10. Advancing advocacy efforts for inclusive practices that build upon unique child, family, and community strengths and are accountable to all children and their families.

We will...

11. Promote every New Mexico citizen's understanding of the importance of high quality, inclusive early childhood programs and practices.
12. Support interactions and relationships that foster self-reflection.
13. Utilize information about the growth, development, and experiences of individual children and families for program and curriculum development and improvement.
14. Continuously improve services and supports by evaluating current practices and incorporating effective methods, models, and research in our work with children and families.
15. Promote the establishment of aligned services and supports that build on both the unique assets of each child and acknowledge the strengths of children's and families' heritage, language, and culture.
16. Ensure that services and supports are provided by people who reflect the diversity of the community, are well educated, and are well compensated.
17. Establish an integrated, multidisciplinary system of professional development, training, and technical assistance that supports the design, implementation, and evaluation of practices that are respectful of and responsive to each child and family.