



# Garden Gate School Gate

Parent Handbook

2017-2018

107 Park Hill Ave. Columbia, MO 65203

573-449-8753

[www.gardengatepreschool.org](http://www.gardengatepreschool.org)

# CONTENTS

- Mission Statement of Garden Gate School.....3
- An Overview of pedagogy.....4
- Preschool as Kindergarten.....4
- Rhythm and Festivals.....5-6
- Supporting Children in the Home.....6-7
- Suggested Readings.....8
- Kindergarten Enrollment and Financial Policies.....9-10
- Kindergarten Schedule and Details for Parents.....10-11
- General School Policies.....11-12
- School Organization.....13
- Communications.....14

# *Garden Gate School Mission Statement*

**“Education is a social process; education is growth;  
education is not preparation for life but is life itself.”**

**~John Dewey**

Garden Gate School seeks to enrich the lives of mid-Missouri children, their families, and communities. Garden Gate is inspired by the ideas of Rudolf Steiner, Vivian Paley, John Dewey, Richard Louv, Karen Le Billon as well and others. We believe in honoring early childhood as a time to imitate and explore through experience; engaging young imaginations through storytelling; attending to the rhythms, cycles, and patterns of nature in all we do; and awakening the child’s capacities to live joyfully with others. Our school has been in operation since 2007, inspiring families to simplify their lives and address their needs holistically.

## **Overview of our pedagogy**

Our influences: Rudolf Steiner, Vivian Paley, Helle Heckmann, John Dewey, Jean Piaget, William James, Alison Gopnik, Richard Louv, David Sobel, Karen Le Billon.

By working with the child as a whole: hands, heart and head – we draw on the ideas of many. Our “child-centered” approach to education, allows us to pay close attention to each child within a rhythmic structure of the days, weeks, and seasons.

Teachers create predictable activities in the day; lots of playtime outdoors, focused circle-times with seasonal poetry, music and movement, repetitive story-telling, and the constant presence of adults engaged in meaningful work. This play-oriented curriculum allows our children to come to the “headwork” of school when they are ready and eager for it.

## **Preschool as Kindergarten**

Through creative play, storytelling, puppet shows, games, songs, and circle time, we build a strong foundation for the young child’s power of wonder and fantasy. We bring fairy tales because they are full of nourishing pictures of human relationships and they allow the young child to develop their own inner pictures, an important beginning to literacy. We believe that our older children enter first grade ready to learn.

Young children deeply identify with the gestures and moods in their environment. One of the tasks of the kindergarten teacher is to create an environment worthy of imitation. We use warmth, natural materials, daily rhythm, healthy food, song, and a beautiful environment to create this context.

Discipline also works out of this principle of imitation. If a child speaks unkind words or hits another child, the teacher models sympathy for the hurt child and keeps the other child close-by. We model compassion and concern and try to draw the other child into the healing, but we do not force. By realizing how imitative young children are, the teacher highlights her own best traits for all to have.

## Rhythm and Festivals

Why celebrate festivals together? We have so isolated ourselves, in this culture, from the communal and harmonizing effects of festivals that it's important to look at why we want to bring them back. From the rhythm in the classroom to the rhythms of nature, we acknowledge the security that orderly rhythm gives to us. Young children, in this security, gain the freedom of thought they will need to become creative adults. In the process of nurturing these cycles we are also sponsoring the young child's feelings of reverence. A wonder-filled approach to the world will breathe life into solving the world's problems by respecting difference and caring for others, for the earth and for oneself. This, rather than criticism or cynicism, in the early years will be the groundwork for creative and positive adults.

This educational system brings communities together through several non-religious festivals. As teachers, parents, and children come together to prepare for the festivals we learn to work together. Garden Gate will offer several festivals for school participants. All festivals and their respective dates are included on the school calendar.

### Michaelmas (September 29)

During harvest season, we celebrate Michaelmas. As we transition from the warmth of summer to the cool of autumn, we begin to turn inwards. The story of Michael battling and overcoming the dragon brings strength as we enter the new season. There are many renditions of his bravery, particularly his battle with the dragon. Our children can experience this in their re-enactment of a battle with the dragon, a defeat of the powers of darkness and our own inner dragons.

*Michael, he walked alone,  
He was the lord of wind and stone, He took his sword up in his hand, And fought  
for good throughout the land. The dragon came with breath of fire, And long they  
fought til both did tire.*

*At last the beast was brought to bay, Michael, he won the day!*

Martinmas (November 11)

St. Martin shared his jacket with a poor beggar on a very cold night and used his lantern to lead the way to warmth and safety. St. Martin's story inspires us to share with others. This festival brings us together to hear the story of St. Martin, share food, walk with our lanterns, sing songs, and feel our individual lights become shared warmth on a cold night.

*The sunlight fast is dwindling*

*My little lamp needs kindling.*

*Its beam shines far in darkest night dear lantern, guard me with your light.*

Winter Spiral (December, last day of school)

We construct a spiral of evergreen boughs and then adorn it with treasures from the mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms. Families come with candles in cored apples ready to walk the spiral. As each child walks the spiral with his or her candle, we sing our winter songs. Each child walks out of the spiral to find a glittering star upon which they place their candle and turn to watch others do the same. This is a celebration of the warmth and light we find in the coming darkness of winter. It is a quiet festival and we say our good-byes in order to allow the experience to settle into our children without explanation or interference.

May Day (May 1)

This is an ancient festival welcoming spring and the changing of the seasons. The maypole represents the tree of life. We bring our musical instruments, sing songs, and picnic while the children wind ribbons around the tree.

## **Supporting Children at Home**

We encourage families to support the work of the school by finding their own ways to create harmonic rhythms and sponsor reverence. Each mealtime can be marked with a lighted candle; a family birthday tradition can be created; or a special bedtime routine can be established. Simply keeping meals and bedtime consistent helps the child to feel secure. This rhythm at home allows the child to know what each day will bring but also provides daily opportunities for the family to connect and celebrate their time together.

## Television and Computers

Waldorf education encourages us to carve out time for our children to use their own imaginations, their own resources for play, and ultimately for the development of independent thought. Media of all types, including television, computers, video games, hand-held devices, and even the radio, places children into passive roles, fills them up with other people's narratives, and determines how much attention they need. These are exactly the opposite impulses of what this education offers. We encourage young children to find their own sources of amusement and activity but to do so children need the gift of time and peace in the home. All of us confront the need to take time for ourselves in order to complete our tasks. The challenge is to transition away from the quick fix of media entertainment to the satisfying work of imaginative play. We hope families at Garden Gate will offer their children the freedom of a quiet room or time outdoors and simple props to keep their imaginations alive.

## **Suggested Readings**

Experience and Education. 1938. John Dewey.

A Child's Work; the importance of fantasy play. 2004. Vivian Gussin Paley.

French Children eat Everything: How Our Family Move to France, Cured Picky Eating, Banned Snacking, and Discovered 10 Simple Rules for Raising Happy, Healthy Eaters. 2012. Karen Le Billon.

Beyond the Rainbow Bridge: Nurturing our Children from Birth to Seven. 2000. Barbara J. Patterson, Pamela Bradley, and Jean Riordan.

Millennial Child : Transforming Education in the Twenty-First Century. 1999. Eugene Schwartz.

Heaven in a Heartless World. 1977. Christopher Lasch.

The Hurried Child. 2001. David Elkind.

Children at Play: Using Waldorf Principles to Foster Childhood Development. 1996. Heidi Britz-Crecelius.

Festivals, Family and Food. 1982. Diana Carey and Judy Large.

Simplicity Parenting. 2009. Kim John Payne.

Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder. 2005. Richard Louv.

You are your Child's First Teacher. 1989. Rahima Baldwin.

Storytelling with Children. 2000. Nancy Mellon.

Education Towards Freedom. 1972. Franz Carlgren.

Childhood; A Study of the Growing Child. 1995. Caroline von Heydebrand.



## **Enrollment and Financial Policies**

The Application Process (enrollment is rolling); interested parents contact Garden Gate by phone, e-mail, mail, or in person.

Parents visit the school and meet with the director or a teacher to discuss whether Garden Gate is a good fit for the family and the school. Parents can receive the application from the director or download the application from the website.

To enroll, families must submit an application and non-refundable \$75 application fee per child. For re-enrolling families, this fee is applied towards tuition. The application and \$75 check made out to "Garden Gate School" is sent to the Garden Gate director:

Deborah Kallmann 107 Park Hill Ave. Columbia, MO 65203.

Parents receive notification about admission to the school.

Enrolled parents return the re-enrollment deposit, which serves as their first tuition payment, by April 1st to ensure enrollment. All families admitted to the school will receive a packet of information and required forms in the summer before school begins.

### **Forms Required for Enrollment**

We are required to have up-to-date immunization records as well as emergency information for each child. Parents also receive a liability form and a tuition agreement as part of the registration packet. These forms need to be filled out on return to school in the Fall.

### **Financial Commitment**

In order for Garden Gate School to exist, thrive, and grow, enrolled families commit to supporting the school in various ways, including a yearly tuition. The tuition payments are structured to make this education as affordable as possible to families while supporting the work of teachers and the further development of the school.

### **Absences and Tuition**

Total tuition and installments remain the same for each month or half-month regardless of non-attendance for any reason, school closure, or holidays.

## Child-Absences

Tuition applies to the space your child occupies. If, for any reason, your child will not be able to attend during any given month, the cost of your tuition remains the same.

## Withdrawal

If a child needs to be withdrawn during the school year, one month's paid notice is required.

## **Schedule and Details for Parents**

### Yearly Schedule

The fall semester of Garden Gate School takes place from the middle of August to mid-December. The spring semester of Garden Gate School runs from mid-January to mid-May. Each year parents will receive a school calendar.

### Daily Schedule

Parents are encouraged to bring children at 8:45 a.m. and remain with them until 9:00 a.m. when we begin our morning.

Pick-up time is 1:00 p.m.; children will be hungry and ready for some quiet time.

### Beginning the Day

What happens in school can be affected by how the day begins for your child. Keeping the mornings consistent and providing a protein-filled breakfast will help to ready a child for a day of learning and activity. We ask that children not be exposed to electronic media before arrival. Children should be dressed for the weather, and kept warm on cold days. Children should arrive with a full night's sleep, a warm body, and a full belly.

### Dress Code

Children should wear clothing that is comfortable and suitable for the weather. Parents should leave an extra set of clothes at school. Clothing should have no media characters, advertising, or writing on them.

## Essential Garden Gate Outdoor “Gear”:

- Sun hat (wide brimmed)
- Rain/mud boots
- Rain coat
- Snow boots
- Snow bibs/overalls
- Snow jacket

## Morning Snack

Children are involved in creating a mid-morning snack with the teacher. Our meals are at the heart of our day; filled with the challenges of sitting together for a while, sharing stories and tasting a multi-course meal.

## General School Policies

### Parking

You may park in the driveway and on the north side of Park Hill Ave. for drop-off. If you are parking for longer periods of time and there is no space in the driveway and three cars are parked on Park Hill Ave., parking is available on Garth Ave. and Parkway (please do not park on the south side of Park Hill Ave. per neighbors' request).

### Absences

If your child will not be attending please call the teacher or assistant and leave a message. Also, please let us know if you have plans to be away.

### School Closings

We will cancel school if Columbia Public Schools close for bad weather. Those announcements are made on local radio stations. We will alert you to exceptions.

## Teacher Absence

Unless we have a substitute, families will be notified at least 24 hours before school the next day of a teacher's absence.

## Medical Policy

Generally, children with infectious diseases or parasitic infestations are not to be in school. We need to keep other children's exposure to flu, head lice, pinworms etc. to a minimum. Also, a sick child needs to rest and recover from the illness.

If your child has a sore throat, heavy cough, headache, stomachache, nausea, or fever, please arrange to have the child stay at home or to be cared for elsewhere. The child may return to school 24 hours after the last major symptoms subside.

Children with parasitic infestations (head lice, pinworms, scabies, etc.) will not be allowed in school. Re-admittance will be possible upon proof of treatment, including a prescribed waiting period should one be given by a doctor. In the case of head lice we may need to check the child in the company of the parent.

We can only administer prescribed medicine that is in its original packaging. The parent is to bring the medicine along with written authorization and clear instructions for the teacher.

When a child becomes ill at school, we will contact the parent to pick up the sick child.

## **School Organization**

Garden Gate School functions through the efforts of the Director, Teachers and Assistants, Parent Teacher Committee, and volunteer support of parents and community members.

### Director

The director guides the development of the school by implementing the school's mission by daily decisions. In addition, the director guides the administrative, financial, and outreach realms of the school. The director is also responsible for the overall pedagogical goals of Garden Gate School, nurturing parents'

connections to the school, and creating and maintaining its representation in all media.

## Teachers

The teachers are not only responsible for the pedagogical tasks of the preschool but also for its continuous development, and maintaining curriculum standards. Teachers administer the day-to-day business of the school, create opportunities for parent education, support publicity, and develop connections to the community at large.

## Parent Teacher Committee

The Parent Teacher Committee (PTC) consists of parents and teachers who are committed to learning more about the school's philosophy of education. Members are also very interested in enriching their own family lives with the methods of our pedagogy. The members of this committee are the "hands" of the school. Members will meet once each month and will chair our action groups. For example, if we have a fundraiser, a member of this committee will lead the efforts in planning and conducting the fundraiser, enlisting volunteers, and making it happen. Members of this committee may also bring questions and concerns of parents to the teachers, and so the committee will be a great forum for communication between parents and teachers. We ask that all members of this committee are parents whose children have enrolled at Garden Gate for one year. The volunteer coordinator and handwork coordinator attend PTC meetings as needed.

## Parents

Parents may join task forces that put together events for fundraising, festivals, publicity. In addition, parents are invited to attend reading groups, enrichments, and workshops offered by the school. Parents may also make connections to other organizations in town for a larger school outreach.

## **Communications**

It is important to keep communication active among teachers, parents, and the organizing bodies of the school in order to deal with issues as soon as they arise.

### Internal Communications

Information about events as well as what the children are doing in school will be sent primarily via e-mail. If you are not active users of e-mail let us know so that we can accommodate you.

In addition, our website contains event and schedule updates and articles.

### Problem-solving Procedures

Whenever a problem comes up between individuals and the school, we expect that it will be taken up face-to-face by the individuals involved. If an issue lies between the teacher and a parent and cannot be resolved, then the director will facilitate a problem-solving session.