



## **Community Handbook**

The Community Handbook Acknowledgement form must be signed by a parent or guardian at the time of enrollment. The policies, philosophy, terms and conditions set forth in this handbook apply to all members of The Garden community.

### **Montessori Philosophy**

The Montessori Method of education was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, Italy's first female physician. She opened her first "school" (Casa dei Bambini) in 1907. Today, Montessori schools flourish all over the world. Fundamental to all of Dr. Montessori's ideas is a deep respect for a child's ability to learn. She recognized that children go through certain phases during which they learn more easily than at any other time in their lives. This innate potential to learn is dependent upon a loving environment that encourages the active pursuit of knowledge.

Dr. Montessori's developmentally appropriate approach to learning is designed to fit each child instead of making each child fit into a preset program. She believed that learning should take place in multi-age classrooms where children who are at various stages of development can learn from and with each other. This learning should take place in a non-competitive atmosphere for each child to develop at his/her own speed. Dr. Montessori observed that the best way for young children to learn is by active, hands-on experiences. She developed the idea of the prepared environment, where the classroom contains a wide variety of cognitive materials that foster learning in numerous areas. The purpose of the materials is not just to impart knowledge to children, but rather to provide them with stimuli that capture their attention and initiate a process of concentration.

### **Mission Statements**

**The Garden Montessori Toddler Community and Children's House** follow the Montessori educational principles of providing child-directed, individualized, hands-on learning within a prepared environment. The school seeks to educate the social, physical, intellectual, and emotional needs of each child through developmentally appropriate materials and activities; to

generate a sense of community among children, teachers, and families; to promote a culture of peace and unity not just within our own school, but within the world.

Our **Wild Hearts Tots and Preschool** mission is to provide a complete nature immersion experience through a Montessori lens, allowing students the opportunity to develop a deep love and respect for our earth and all of the creatures who reside within it, guiding them to the discovery of their own creative talents and in exploration of academic concepts within a fun and nurturing environment.

**Moore Montessori Community School** is a vibrant learning community, where diverse students build strong academic foundations, executive function skills, and trust in their abilities, in preparation for lives of joy and purpose in the 21st century.

### **School Objectives**

- To follow the child's interests through use of a child-led approach to education with regards to both academic and life skills
- To provide support and education for the whole family
- To provide an instructional program that follows an emergent curriculum based on Montessori concepts and materials
- To connect students with nature in a meaningful way
- To create and encourage a caring, supportive, purposeful, stimulating environment conducive to each child's learning
- To ensure breadth and balance in all subjects and differentiation of learning needs reflecting all abilities
- To provide opportunities to develop social, emotional, and cultural aspects of children's learning
- To offer a culturally rich learning experience for all students where everyone feels represented
- To support early childhood development through individualized instruction
- To support a community of adult learners - parents and staff - in carrying out the school mission through continuous parent and teacher education
- To represent high-quality early childhood education as the work of skilled and talented professionals who care deeply about the future of our world

## **An Introduction to the Classrooms**

The Montessori classroom is a beautifully prepared, enriched environment, with child-sized furnishings and materials within reach of even the smallest student. The diversity of ages among the students necessitates a broad range of activities, and allows each child, regardless of age, the opportunity to find work suitable for his or her stage of development. All children can develop at their own pace and find work suitable for his or her stage of development according to their own capacities in a non-competitive and supportive atmosphere. Montessori classrooms and curriculum are prepared based on identified Sensitive Periods and the four planes of development. Work in the early childhood classrooms falls into four main categories:

1. **Practical Life:** Of prime importance, this area includes activities such as sweeping, scrubbing, polishing, and other everyday tasks the child has observed in his or her own home environment. These activities allow the child to order his or her physical environment to perfection, and in turn, to order his or her own mind. They are also familiar and serve as a link between home and school. We believe that it is most important to focus on Practical Life skills such as self-care, care of the environment, food preparation, grace and courtesy, etc. and let the children gently and naturally find their way to learning more complex concepts by way of games and hands-on activities using specifically designed materials rather than using worksheets or memorization techniques.

2. **Sensorial:** Sensorial means using the senses. Special materials in this area are designed to help the child isolate and classify the perceptions of sound, texture, color, shape and size. The child moves, touches and explores actual materials that teach concepts by using all of their senses.

3. **Language:** Montessori observed that young children have a sensitive period during which learning names are of interest and relatively easy. Thus, basic nomenclature from geography, history, botany, ecology, astronomy, zoology and cultural studies is presented as children begin to show interest. Grammatical concepts are also gradually introduced to children around age 4. Once a child enters our Preschool Age and Kindergarten Programs (3-6yr) and they begin to show readiness, s/he builds from learning sounds to writing words then from writing words to reading words then from reading words to reading sentences. Again, all learning is child-led, and we strongly believe in following the child's cues and using our observations and general knowledge of sensitive periods for learning and age-appropriate activities to present certain materials and encourage academic challenges. We believe that children learn these skills in their own time when they are not pressured or forced into doing so based on their age or classroom placement. When they begin to show a genuine interest, we support and encourage this interest through the prepared environment along with guided instruction when needed.

4. **Mathematics:** The young child, in his or her need for order, seeks out mathematical concepts as a means of development. Montessori math materials present abstract math operations in a concrete manner, a presentation that children this age can understand. The sensorial materials

also provide the children with a sensorial base for future abstractions when they reach Lower Elementary. Those in our Preschool Age and Kindergarten Programs (3-6yr) learn through guided support, and self-directed exploration as well as observation of and guidance from older peers in a mixed-age environment. Beyond the four main categories, are the cultural studies. These areas may include but are not limited to art, botany, zoology, geology, music, nature study, history and geography. These topics are not taught as subjects in isolation but are intertwined naturally within the studies taking place in the work of the class. Connections are shown and the focus follows the interests of the children.

## **Family Role**

The strongest foundation that can be provided for the education of the children is the support and care of families. The Garden Montessori and Moore Montessori Community School are both committed to partnering with families to nurture and protect the children. Parents and Guardians are welcome to participate in our school in various ways.

### **1. Family Education Meetings**

Families will have the opportunity to come together with faculty to discuss Montessori theory and learn about the work the children are doing in the classroom. These are also times to meet and get to know other parents and guardians.

### **2. Parent/Guardian and Teacher Conferences**

At any time within the year parents and guardians are welcome to ask for a conference with their child's teacher and the teacher may do the same. Teachers will hold regularly (twice yearly) scheduled formal conferences with the parents or guardians for each child. At that time the child's progress will be discussed in all areas of development.

### **3. Volunteerism**

We welcome those who can offer their energies and expertise in support of the school. Throughout your child's time with us families will be informed of various opportunities to become a part of the culture of the school and model volunteerism for their children.

### **4. Classroom Observations**

Family members are welcome to and strongly encouraged to observe their child in the classroom setting. It takes up to 6 weeks at the start of the school year for the children to be confident with the routines in the classroom and become what Montessori termed "Normalized" so we only ask that families give the children that time to adjust before observing.

## **Fees and Payment Policy**

The Garden will handle all administrative functions for all students including MMCS Pre-K and Wild Hearts students. All fees, payments and inquiries for enrollment will be made directly to The Garden. Fees and payment policies are subject to change for future years, tuition and fees will be finalized and announced by January 1st of each year. The Garden will provide sufficient notice of any changes occurring after your official registration has been submitted and allowances will be made for withdrawals based on these changes. All Families enrolling at The Garden are required to commit to a full academic school year by way of the Tuition Agreement or payment in full for the school year. Multiple payment types and options are available through

this system. A 10% deposit plus all required fees are due at time of enrollment in order to reserve your child's spot. All fees are outlined separately in our tuition & fees document. Tuition is payable in full or in 10 or 12 monthly installments. Monthly payment plans are offered as a convenience for families, but all families enrolling using the monthly payment plan must submit a Tuition Agreement stating their commitment to full payment of the yearly tuition amount. A 10% tuition deposit is required along with registration and supply fees at time of enrollment. A sibling discount of 5% will be applied to the 2nd (and each consecutive) child's tuition for families enrolling multiple children, by default, the discount will be applied to the child(ren) with the lowest tuition rate if tuition rates differ between children.. Discount is applicable for school year & summer enrollment. A 15% late fee is applied to unpaid invoices on the 2nd of each month. Families with past due accounts are subject to dismissal. The salaries, supplies and administrative expenses of The Garden are supported entirely by fees. Tuition payments are due the first of each month according to your tuition agreement, irrespective of the actual number of days and hours the child attends. The child's spot will not be reserved until all required enrollment forms, fees and any other requested information is complete and submitted. Any deadlines set forth regarding submitting these fees and forms are firm and no exceptions will be made. The parent/ guardian/custodian will be responsible for payment of fees, deposit and monthly tuition payments in order to reserve the enrollment spot. A grace period is not offered, all payments must be submitted by the 1st of the month in order to avoid the 15% late fee which will be applied on the 2nd of the month to any remaining balances. If payment is not received by the 10th of the month, students may be discharged for non-payment.

### **Eligibility & Student Placement**

Students eligible for the Pre-K at MMCS are 3 or 4 years of age by August 31st of the academic year and are using the toilet independently.

Students eligible for the Wild Hearts Nature School are between the ages of 3 and 6 years as of August 31st of the academic year and are using the toilet independently.

Students eligible for Wild Hearts+Kindergarten are ages 5-6 as of August 31st of the academic year and are using the toilet independently.

Students eligible for the Children's House are between 30 months and 6 years as of August 31st of the academic year and are in the process of toilet learning. Children's House is a half-day program for our 3-4 year old students. Those Children's House students aged 5-6 are also eligible to attend the Wild Hearts Kindergarten afternoon program which continues through 3:00pm.

Students eligible for Wild Hearts Tots (Pinehurst) and the Toddler Community (Southern Pines) are confidently walking and between the ages of 15 and 36 months by August 31st of the academic year. We assess confidently walking from their ability to independently walk (without the aid of a staff member) from the building to the playground space while holding on to a walking rope alongside their classmates.

Students eligible for the Parent & Child Montessori programs are between the ages of 0 and 36

months as of August 31st of the academic year and must attend along with a parent or caregiver.

Students eligible for the Afternoon Adventure Club program are between the ages of 3 and 6 years as of August 31st of the academic year and use the toilet independently (this includes the ability to manage their clothing during the toileting process and wipe themselves independently).

Please Note\* The Montessori Primary Classroom at MMCS will consist of children between the ages of 3 and 6 years, though the 3 & 4-year olds enrolled through The Garden attend only ½ days, they will be placed in classrooms with the Kindergarten children who are enrolled through Moore Montessori Community School and who attend full days. All classrooms offer a mixed-age environment. MMCS is unable to accommodate specific requests for placement in certain classrooms, siblings are typically separated whenever possible and students are typically placed with the same teacher for consecutive years when applicable.

### **Non-discrimination and Accessibility policy**

The Garden and MMCS encourage children of all backgrounds to attend. The schools do not discriminate based on gender, race, color, creed, national origin, ethnic background, or ability.

The Garden does not employ a Resource Teacher and is not able to provide accessibility services for its students (including students on the MMCS campus). If any student should require additional support in order to access their education, the family is responsible for obtaining and funding these services. Therapists, aides and other support staff are required to submit a full criminal background check in order to provide services on our campus and should be willing to coordinate closely with our classroom teachers to ensure the success of the student within the classroom environment.

### **Openings**

Openings are limited and determined by student/teacher ratio dependent upon age as well as classroom size and balance of ages in the classroom. Enrollment priority is determined by the following rules:

- \* Staff children have priority for placement in the program of choice
- \* Current eligible toddler students have priority for re-enrollment in the Toddler Community
- \* Current eligible Pre-K students attending at MMCS have priority for re-enrollment in the Pre-K at MMCS
- \* Current Wild Hearts students have priority for re-enrollment in Wild Hearts.
- \* Siblings of current MMCS students have priority for placement in the Pre-K at MMCS
- \* Current Toddler students aging out of the toddler program or those looking to change their program of enrollment have priority for re-enrollment in Wild Hearts Pre-K, Children's House and/or Pre-K at MMCS (based on availability and time of re-enrollment – future year placement is not guaranteed)

- \* Toddler siblings of current students have priority for placement in the Toddler Community
- \* Current eligible Parent & Child students have priority for placement in the Toddler Community
- \* Current Afternoon students (Art/Gardening/Yoga/Sports/Nature Club) have priority for placement in the morning program of their choice

Children with a submitted application and paid application fee (on the waiting list) will be admitted according to the date of application with the following factors taken into consideration:

~Age

~Previous Montessori Experience

~Parents have attended an information session and/or met with administrators.

*All attempts are made to place students in the preferred program, but due to limited spots, we cannot guarantee placement for future years. Enrollments and re-enrollments are processed in the order they are received. Re-enrollment forms received after January 1st may be required to return to the waiting list for enrollment. Exceptions to the above policies may be made by administration under consideration of beneficial classroom dynamics. The schools may refuse re-enrollment to current students if circumstances arise in which administrators and/or teachers determine that it is not in the best interest of the student, their family, their classmates, the school or any other members of the school community. Please note that all enrollments for Afternoon Adventures at MMCS and Montessori Toddler Community at MMCS are contingent upon the finalization of permitting for rezoning through the Town of Southern Pines. If enrollments are delayed due to circumstances beyond our control related to this process, parents will be notified and will have the opportunity to receive a full refund for deposits/registration fees and tuition paid if delays to opening caused by this process disallow the child from attending the program.*

Please note that, ultimately, parents are responsible for ensuring children are ready to join their classroom when school begins. Toddlers enrolled in our Toddler Community receive toileting support from their teachers and require consistency in approach to toileting at home in order to ensure success. If a child is not using the toilet independently, which includes dressing and cleaning themselves, (for MMCS Pre-K/WH classrooms), toilet learning (Children's House) or confidently walking (for toddler classrooms), or is unprepared in any other notable way, by the first day of school, the child's start date will be delayed until s/he meets the requirements for enrollment. Tuition will not be prorated or refunded in these cases; parents will continue to be responsible for paying tuition in order to hold the child's spot until they are ready to join the classroom. Families are still held to the tuition agreement if they ultimately make the decision to unenroll their child based on this gap timeframe until/unless a student can be found to fill the vacated space.

## **Enrollment Forms**

The Garden will handle all administrative functions for MMCS, so all forms and inquiries will be made directly to the Garden. Copies of all forms will be shared and on file at MMCS. Parents must have all enrollment forms completed and returned to The Garden electronically (preferred),

via email to [info@thegardenmontessori.org](mailto:info@thegardenmontessori.org), in person at the Linden Rd campus, or mailed to PO Box 1105 West End, NC 27376 before the child's spot is reserved. Enrollment forms MUST be received by the assigned deadline to maintain the child's spot. The Garden has a limited number of openings and a substantial waiting list; it is not possible for the administration to hold spots for those who have not submitted ALL paperwork on time.

Enrollment forms include the following:

**Application Form:** Submitted at time of application, parents are responsible for keeping all information current during the time their child is enrolled. This includes updating addresses, phone numbers, emergency contacts, etc

**Tuition Agreement:** By way of electronic signature upon enrollment.

**Enrollment Packet** which includes:

~**Emergency Authorization Form:** This form gives The Garden and MMCS permission to act on your behalf in an emergency medical situation and allows us to give EMTs permission to transport your child to a hospital should they need to be transported. EMTs MUST view this form before they will transport a child, so it is VERY important that this form is filled out correctly and submitted in time

~**Release Form: Picture/Video:** Form must be submitted for all children, even those opting out of participating in the release

~**Community Handbook Acknowledgment:** Must be signed by a legal parent/guardian

**Medical Packet**, which includes:

~**Record of Immunizations:** We reserve the right to refuse admission to any student who fails to submit a current immunization record (alternate submissions, including waivers are subject to review by the MMCS school board and The Garden Administrators and require approval by both parties prior to completion of enrollment. Application Fee refunds will not be refunded if a student is refused entry for this reason. We do not accept religious waivers

~**Medical Report:** A medical report signed by a doctor (not directly related to the child) is required for all children. Children with specific illnesses, allergies or other medical needs must submit additional forms

~**Additional Forms:** It is the parent's responsibility to make the school aware of a child's allergy, behavioral concern, disability, developmental delay, difference or other condition and to obtain the necessary forms prior to the deadline and within enough time to get a physician signature if needed. Common examples include Asthma, Seizure, Food Allergy Action Plans

~**Accessibility Info Form:** Any child who may need additional resources or support to access their education must submit this form; if a parent suspects or is in the process of obtaining a diagnosis this packet is also required.

### **Withdrawal from the Program**

Parents wishing to withdraw their child must provide a statement in writing to The Garden at least 30 days prior to the discontinuation of service. Parents are responsible for all fees for the



remainder of the school year as noted in the tuition agreement. Tuition and fees are non refundable and non-transferable regardless of time of withdrawal. The Garden does retain the right to report outstanding fees to credit reporting agencies. Exemptions to this policy will be made for families providing military orders for relocation mid-year.

PLEASE NOTE: School policy requires parents to address any concerns openly, respectfully and directly with school administrators. The Garden/MMCS maintains a positive environment that reflects our practices of grace and courtesy. If parents are unable to communicate their concerns or needs with administration and the relationship is not working for either or both sides, and it is found to affect the classroom dynamics or school community function, families will be asked to leave the school without notice required or tuition refund. Parents who do not adhere to this policy or who choose to leave on their own accord, regardless of reason or claim, will be responsible for paying all remaining tuition fees regardless of removal.

THE SCHOOL IS NOT LICENSED FOR FULL-TIME CHILD CARE AND IT IS ILLEGAL FOR CHILDREN TO REMAIN IN OUR CARE FOR MORE THAN 4 HOURS PER DAY. PARENTS SHOULD ARRIVE ON TIME TO ENSURE THEIR CHILD IS PICKED UP WITHIN 4 HOURS OF ARRIVING. A VERBAL WARNING WILL BE GIVEN THE FIRST TIME A PARENT IS LATE PICKING UP THEIR CHILD. AFTER THAT, PARENTS WILL BE CHARGED A FEE FOR LATE PICKUP.

### **Hours of Operation (Academic Year)**

Pre-K at MMCS: Monday through Friday 8:00am-12:00pm

Toddler Community at MMCS: Monday through Friday 8:30am-12:30pm

Wild Hearts Nature School: Monday through Friday 8:45am-12:45pm

Wild Hearts Tots: Monday through Friday TBD

Children's House: Monday through Friday TBD

Afternoon Adventure Club at MMCS: ol: Monday through Thursday 12:00-3:00pm, Fridays 12:00-1:30pm

Parent & Child Montessori at MMCS: Friday 2:00-3:00pm

### **Summer Camp Hours**

Preschool Camps: Monday through Friday 7:45-11:45 am

Toddler Camps: Monday through Friday 8:00am-12:00pm

Full Day Camps: Monday through Friday 7:30-3:00pm

Please note, drop-off and pick-up windows are 15 minutes at the beginning and end of each day

### **Parents' Rights and Responsibilities**

Parents have the right:

To be told about serious behavior concerns on the part of their child, and to visit with the

teacher(s) and administrators in order to bring about improvement in the situation;

To be regularly informed by the teacher or administrators about school activities.

To have access to their child at any time (all parents must sign-in on the Visitor's Log at the school office and be escorted by a staff member while on campus for safety purposes)

To privacy in regard to their child, themselves or their families and any issues concerning the above-mentioned items

To know that their child is cared for in a safe, supportive environment

To confer with the teacher(s) and administrators regarding concerns related to their child or the program

Parents have the responsibility:

To pay fees to The Garden on time (including, but not limited to the registration fees, tuition fees, deposit)

To keep their child's records up to date as explained in the Enrollment Forms section

To drop-off and pick-up their child on time (for their child's specific program hours) as explained in Hours of Operation

To follow health and safety policies

To let the administrators and teachers know if their child will not be attending on a regularly scheduled day

To take note of any communications from the teacher(s)/ administrators regarding their child's behavior, and to cooperate in any efforts to bring about improvement in the situation

To attend parent education meetings scheduled by the school as often as possible

To attend parent/teacher conferences as scheduled

To schedule meetings with the teacher(s)/administrators if any concerns arise during the school year and to maintain open communication with the teacher(s)/ administrators about any concerns or issues pertaining to the child and their school performance

To maintain privacy in regard to other children in this setting

To maintain a positive, mature attitude and to exhibit grace and courtesy within our school community towards staff, Administration and other families/children within our program

while on and off campus

To discuss any concerns or issues with staff and administration immediately, respectfully and directly, in a mature and open manner

To share with both The Garden and MMCS administrators any custody agreements in cases of joint custody and to abide by the rules of this custody agreement regarding pickup/drop-off of the child as well as time spent at school observing or volunteering. The Garden/ MMCS will not be involved in any mediation between parents and is not responsible for ensuring communication between parents. The Garden and MMCS staff will not participate in any custody hearings unless required by law. Parents are responsible for any and all legal fees, expenses and time spent (based on an hourly rate determined by administrator salary) by any and all staff members that are required in order to participate in or assist with any and all custody-related issues. In some cases, the Garden/MMCS may require a separate agreement specific to school that is signed by both parents/ legal guardians stating when each has permission to be on site with the child and when each can pick the child up

To refrain from the following behaviors which may contribute to a toxic school community: Gossip about (by word of mouth, social media or phone/text etc.) or being disrespectful in communication towards staff, children, parents, volunteers or any other member of the school community. This includes discussion of other children's behavior in the school or outside of school, opinions of other community parents, concerns with staff members or administration, concerns regarding school policies/ practices/ philosophies, arguments between parents or any other negative discussion of the school community or its members

To remove oneself and one's family from the community when they no longer see it as a good fit

To educate themselves on age-appropriate behaviors/ child development in order to understand classroom and dynamics in a group care setting. There are a wealth of resources/previous Parent Education sessions available on our Parent Portal as well as books/resources available in our Lending Library at the Linden Rd campus

To refrain from hiring any employed member of The Garden or MMCS for personal services, including babysitting, house sitting, pet-sitting, tutoring, or any other service not mentioned here

To submit all payments on time as agreed upon in the tuition agreement.

### **Children's Rights and Responsibilities**

Children have the right:

To have a safe, supportive, and consistent environment;

To use all the program equipment, materials, and facilities on an equal basis;

To have respectful treatment;

To have discipline that is fair and non-punitive;  
To receive nurturing care from staff members who are actively involved with them;  
To a challenging and developmentally-appropriate education

Children have the responsibility:

To be accountable for their actions, considering the child's age and developmental stage;  
To respect the school rules that guide them while at school;  
To remain with the group and staff at all times;  
To care for materials and equipment properly.

## **Healthy Eating**

Children should eat breakfast prior to attending school. Toddler students will have a snack during the early morning work cycle that is brought in by parents on a rotating calendar assignment which will be provided in advance. Toddler and Wild Hearts students should pack a hearty, healthy lunch each day. All students should also bring a water bottle to school each day, which can be refilled as needed.

We do have children with allergies enrolled and parents are responsible for taking allergies into consideration when packing snacks, lunches and food that children eat prior to coming to campus which could leave them with allergen residue on their clothes/body. A list of non-safe foods will be provided, and parents should avoid packing foods containing or processed in a facility with any of those ingredients. If a food containing or processed in a facility with any allergen is packed, the teacher will remove it and the child will be unable to eat the item at school. We do not keep any additional food for children on campus to supplement food items that may have had to be removed from the child's packed meal due to allergens.

Parents/Guardians should notify administrators of any food allergies and submit accompanying forms and medication. It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure all medication provided remains current (not expired).

## **Health and Safety Policy**

In order to have a safe and healthy environment, the schools have guidelines for all parents/guardians to follow. Every effort is taken to reduce the spread of illness by encouraging hand washing and other sanitary processes. If a child has a known medical condition (asthma, diabetes, seizure disorder, etc.), it is the parents' responsibility to inform the administrators of the steps to be taken if a problem occurs during school hours using the Medical Action Plan form. Parents should make sure that any necessary medication is available, the Medication Permission Form for its use has been completed for each day needed, and demonstrate to staff how to use the medication (if needed).

If a child has any one of the following conditions, the parent should not send the child to school. If these conditions arise while the child is at school, the parent will be notified to pick up the

child immediately:

- Contagious diseases. This includes but is not limited to the flu, coronavirus, strep throat, chicken pox, measles, conjunctivitis (pink eye), ringworm, scabies, or lice.
- Fever. Fever is defined as having a temperature of 100°F or higher taken under the arm or in the ear, 101°F taken orally, or 102°F taken rectally. A child needs to be fever free for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to our care, that means the child is fever free without the aid of Tylenol®, or any other fever reducing substance. If your child's fever is due to teething and you feel that they can attend the program without trouble, it is not required that your child stay home for a fever due to teething.
- Vomiting or diarrhea (including runny, watery or bloody stool) within the past 24 hours.
- Breathing trouble, sore throat, swollen glands, loss of voice, hacking or continuous coughing.
- Runny nose (other than clear), draining ears or eyes.
- A rash, until diagnosed and determined to be non-contagious.
- Draining sores or burns.
- Child is irritable, continuously crying (unable to be soothed), or requires more attention than we can provide without hurting the health, safety or well-being of the other children in our care.
- If a child exhibits one or more of the above symptoms and has a doctor's note stating that they are not contagious, the child may return to school in accordance with the date on the doctor's note. If your child is not feeling well in the morning, do not send him or her to school (particularly if he or she has a fever of 100 degrees or above). The child should not return to school within 24 hours of vomiting/diarrhea, running a fever of 100 degrees or higher, or being sent home for an above-mentioned illness.
- Students should not return to school until 24 hours have elapsed after beginning the course of antibiotics.
- Parents must arrive to pick up their sick child within 30 minutes of an initial contact being made by the school (contact will come to direct caregivers through phone, text or the Remind App).
- In case of accident or illness, parents of the child will be called immediately. Teachers will administer minor first aid, i.e., cleansing, bandages, ice packs, etc. The child will be moved to a quiet spot until the parent/guardian arrives in the case of serious injury/illness. In cases of injury, incident reports will be provided explaining what happened and what treatment was administered. Parents should sign this report upon picking up their child and will receive an electronic copy of the form following this from their child's teacher. In serious cases, the child will be taken to one of the local hospitals by emergency vehicle for treatment and the parents will be called.

### **Distribution of Medications**

Children should be given medicine or have topical sprays/creams (including sunscreen, bug spray and diaper rash cream) applied prior to attending school. Emergency medicines will be

stored per doctor's instructions and given only in an emergency and according to the Medical Action Plan. If a child must be given any medication during school hours (including over-the-counter medicine or topical creams such as diaper rash ointment), the parents must complete the Medication Permission Form. This procedure must be followed every day that the child is to receive medication.

Teachers are not permitted by law to administer any medication, or apply any topical sprays/creams (including sunscreen, bug spray, and diaper rash cream) unless this form is complete and up to date. Parents should refrain from placing these items in a child's backpack and instead hand the medication directly to a staff person so it can be stored appropriately out of reach of children. Parents should request a Medical Permission form, fill it out, give the form and the medication to the administrators, and indicate if the medication needs to be refrigerated. Medication should be in its original or duplicate container, or a container accompanied by the doctor's directions. If medication is to be kept at the school for treatment of a chronic condition, no more than a one month supply should remain at the school at any time (with the exception of an EpiPen).

Medicine brought to the school must be kept in a container in the classroom emergency storage. Staff members must complete their portion of the form, and initial it where necessary. One staff person will be authorized to dispense medication. Sunscreens must be stored separately from oral medicine and any food or food service items. Any unused medicine must be disposed of properly or returned directly to the parents. Children may never bring in the medication themselves.

### **Discipline and Discharge Policy**

The Garden and MMCS believe in a positive approach to child guidance in order to provide a safe environment both emotionally, socially and physically where children can learn and grow to their maximum abilities. Children are entitled to a pleasant and harmonious environment at school. We use exercises in Grace and Courtesy as well as positive guidance techniques that with repetition leads the children to calmly make wise choices in behavior and in work. Our goal is to create a caring, cooperative, supportive, and respectful community of learners. We hope to partner with parents/guardians to provide consistent guidance approaches with the children. Children are taught that their school is a peaceful community where there are certain expectations of behavior. Students are proactively offered techniques for self-control and appropriate manners to provide them with high expectations. Mistaken behaviors are approached with respect and in a private manner to reinforce appropriate conduct. In the event that a child exhibits behavior that is continually disruptive and/or harmful to the other children and their progress, and teachers and administrators feel that we have made every effort to improve the situation and have been unsuccessful, the child may be removed from the program.

The behavioral expectations we have for the children all fall under the umbrella of one simple rule:

Respect yourself, others and your environment.

Following are some examples of behaviors that are cause for concern.

1. Intentionally disrupting the learning environment
2. Misuse or abuse of classroom materials, playground equipment or any other school property
3. Intentionally not following directions in the classroom, in the outdoor classroom area or on the playground
4. Encouraging others to break rules
5. Disrupting or impeding the work of others
6. Showing rudeness or disrespect to others
7. Physical aggression of any kind
8. Verbal abuse of any kind
9. Exhibiting any behaviors that jeopardize the safety or experience of other members of the school community

If a child exhibits one or more of the behaviors listed above, actions will be taken as outlined in a Staff Response Plan. The teacher or parent/guardian may request a conference at any time to discuss behavior concerns. Teachers, staff and volunteers are required to document with a Behavior Report for the child exhibiting disruptive behavior or behavior otherwise not in line with the expectations and with an Incident Report for the child who was harmed by any behavior that causes injury or harm and requires first aid or disciplinary action. No one employed by The Garden is permitted to share with parents the names, information or circumstances pertaining to any child other than their own. All staff members present at the time of the incident are encouraged to document their observations. Each child involved will be treated individually and with respect.

Behavior that results in consistent disruption or concern on the part of the staff or physical harm to another person with the intent to do bodily injury exhibited by, but not limited to, hitting, pushing, slapping, kicking, and biting will be addressed immediately and any consistently repeated behavior will be responded to by the use of a Behavior Intervention Plan. ***Parents must become partners in addressing these behaviors and must attend a meeting and assist in developing the BIP, which involves strategies to improve behavior both at home and school.*** In cases where the school feels that staff have done all they can to prevent behaviors that keep any child from accessing their education safely and equitably, disrupt or inhibit the experience of others in the community and a cause or solution cannot be determined, the school may recommend a developmental evaluation to rule out a diagnostic cause, 1:1 support at the cost of the student's family, and/or they may recommend parents seek out a better fit for childcare/preschool to better serve the child.

Guides will never use punishments or rewards to motivate a change in behavior this includes time-outs and positive reinforcement tools like sticker charts. Logical or natural consequences may be applied in order to assist the child in understanding the effect of the behavior.

## **PARENT/GUARDIAN'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR**

- 1. Modeling: A parent is the most important teacher in a child's life. Children observe and often imitate or react to the behavioral responses that are used by the significant adults in their environment. Parents who are respectful and kind to others, especially their own children, are likely to see that same behavior develop in their children. Demonstrating a variety of healthy responses to frustration and setbacks, as well as modeling effective problem-solving techniques and non-judgmental communication are especially valuable to young children who are still learning to establish their own self-control.
  
- 2. Discussion: While children absorb a great deal by observation, discussing ways to show respect, build trust, show empathy, manage anger, and practice forgiveness can help a child build successful relationships.
  
- 3. Reinforcement: Our school philosophy does not advocate external rewards for desired behavior (or punishment for inappropriate behaviors), as this jeopardizes the opportunity for a child to develop intrinsic motivation. However, acknowledging and reinforcing positive behavior is always important and will help shape a child's behavior far better than criticism.
  
- 4. Home/School Communication: Changes in a child's home life may affect his/her behavior and performance at school. Parents should notify the child's teacher/guide if any significant changes occur, such as:
  - Extended vacations or business trips by a family member
  - Child staying somewhere other than home (relative/friend's house) for more than a day or two
  - Loss of family member, including pets
  - Moving /Relocation Change in family environment (separation, divorce, new partner, new baby, etc)

This information will always be kept strictly confidential and only shared with staff working directly with the student.

5. Parent Education: Acquiring the knowledge, skills, and patience to raise healthy, happy and well-adjusted children is an ongoing process that requires a tremendous amount of effort, time, and diligence. Several resources are available, and parents are expected to take proactive responsibility in this area.

- The school has a small lending library of helpful books, videos and other resources for parent use
- The Garden can provide a recommended reading list that covers Montessori philosophy and other topics of education, child development, parenting and discipline
- Parents are encouraged to participate in parent education classes/workshops/meetings offered regularly by our staff or other community agencies



- Parent/Teacher discussions may be scheduled at any time with your child's teacher to exchange ideas and strategies for specific behavioral issues that may be impacting the student or family.

Administrators are also available to discuss educational and behavioral issues at the parent's request.

*NOTE: Enrolling at The Garden is a choice that parents make after a thorough enrollment process that includes in depth information sessions, classroom tours and opportunities to ask questions. Parents who choose to enroll their child at The Garden should ensure that their beliefs and parenting styles align with those clearly represented by The Garden. Students who are unable to progress or become responsible, independent, and productive members of the school community have the option of withdrawal at any time, however, parents remain responsible for outstanding tuition. Parent understanding and support of the expectations established by The Garden is vital to each child's behavior and successful performance. We expect parents to support our efforts and to understand that children cannot be permitted to continually interrupt the learning environment and process for others. If additional support (which may include anything beyond our regular staff ratio or existing resources or materials) is required for any child, it is the parent's responsibility to finance that support so that the child can successfully participate in the program.*

### **Other Policies**

MMCS will notify enrolled families in writing of other policies unique to the school and which are not included in The Garden Community Handbook. Such policies include but are not limited to:

- Specific Channels of Communication
- School attire and extra clothing (Pre-K Students are not required to wear uniforms)
- Arrival and dismissal procedures
- Attendance expectations and procedures
- School closing policies
- Emergency contingency plans (drills, procedures, safety)
- Celebrations and Birthdays
- Field Trip Policy • COVID/Health & Safety Policy
- Discipline Policy

Families with Pre-K students attending MMCS will also be required to submit an MMCS Handbook acknowledgment separately to account for the varying information.

### **Linden Road Campus and MMCS Toddler Community Specific Policies and Procedures**

**School Bags:** Students should bring a "school bag," with them each day. This should be a conveniently sized bag large enough for a change of clothes, towel to sit on for lunch (Wild Hearts), etc. but small enough for your child to carry independently.

**Child's Personal Property:** Although the school attempts to help children stay organized, the school cannot be responsible for lost personal property. Items found at school after hours that are not properly labeled with your child's name will be collected and stored in a lost & found area.

Children should not bring money, toys, food, or other items unnecessary for school activities to school for any reason. If a personal item is brought to school, it will remain in the child's bag and be returned home (assuming teacher awareness of the item). If a child takes any school equipment home, it should be returned promptly.

**School Attire:** Children should wear washable, comfortable play clothes. An extra set of season appropriate clothing must be available at school (Toddler Community/Children's House) or in your child's bag (Wild Hearts Tots/Pre-K) in case clothes become soiled, wet or muddy. All items should be clearly marked with the child's name. Outdoor activities are planned daily, but outdoor play will not be allowed in storms or extreme temperatures. Every child should be properly dressed for the weather. In the winter, this includes snow pants, a hat that covers the ears, warm mittens (insulated), wool socks, and warm boots. Examples of items and brands that have been found successful are available on the Parent Portal under the "Cold Weather Gear" document.

Toddlers and Children's House students should wear "indoor shoes" or slippers/socks with rubber soles, leaving outdoor shoes on the shoe rack upon arriving. This will help us to keep the premises clean and, since children spend a lot of time working on the floor on their mats, this will protect their fingers and help keep floors clean for workspace. Staff/child ratios do not permit the school to keep one or two children inside during outdoor activities, so proper outdoor attire is mandatory as well, including rain gear if needed for wet or rainy days and layers including mittens and hats for cold days. If a child is not wearing appropriate gear for the weather (upon arrival Wild Hearts Tots/Pre-K) or have it available (Children's House/Toddler Community) they will not be allowed to stay at school that day as this is a safety risk.

**Rest Time:** All children's need for rest will be respected; however, we do not provide a cot or blanket or dedicated time for children to sleep. If you think your child may have trouble adjusting to a new schedule, please feel free to pack a blanket or comfort item in his/her bag and we will make your child comfortable in case s/he gets sleepy and needs to rest in the padded quiet area until you arrive. You may also arrange to pick your child up early as s/he adjusts to the schedule.

**Celebrations, Birthdays, and Holidays:** Planned special occasions may include Halloween, Thanksgiving, December Holidays, and students' birthdays. The school is sensitive to the multicultural nature of our community and therefore includes cultural diversity in celebrations whenever possible. Parents are encouraged to share their family's traditions with the children at school. Please let us know if you would like to volunteer to speak to the children about your family's cultural celebrations or traditions.

**Parent Orientation/ Education/Conferences:** Before school begins for the fall term, parents are required to attend Parent Orientation. Parent Orientation is held virtually and a recording will be available on the Parent Portal if you are unable to attend this session live. It is important to note that you are responsible for all information provided within the Orientation session even if you are unable to attend live.

During the year, one parent/guardian and teacher conference will be scheduled per semester.

These conferences take place on campus and childcare is provided during the conference time only on the playground.

We have a lending library and Parent Education videos posted on our Parent Portal with reading materials to help parents familiarize themselves with the Montessori Method. Parents and community members are welcome to observe at the school but must schedule this in advance with your child's teacher/administration.

As noted earlier, for safety/emergency preparedness reasons, all visitors to the building including parents must sign the visitor sign-in sheet at the school office prior to being cleared to enter campus each day. For liability and supervisory reasons, it is not possible for children who visit the program to take part in activities including non-enrolled siblings. Guidelines for observing in your child's classroom are available from administration. We require all volunteers/observers that are not a child's parent/guardian/primary caregiver to obtain a full criminal background check prior to visiting at their own expense.

**Channels of Communication:** Throughout the year, if a parent has any questions about their child's progress or any concerns or questions, they can contact the teacher/guide in person or by email. Teachers may distribute their personal phone numbers at their discretion, but the school does not provide teachers' personal phone numbers. Parents can contact Administrators via the school office phone or Remind App directly to be connected to teachers as needed.

Written and electronic messages from school will be sent periodically to keep parents informed of school happenings and student progress. A weekly email update for each class will list important upcoming events to assist parents in keeping current with activities. A monthly school newsletter will be sent out during the Academic Year leading into every month. Parents should check their email regularly and should sign up for the Remind App (see Parent Portal for the code to sign in) which will be used in the event of an emergency and/or for time-sensitive notifications in order to contact all parents simultaneously. Notices regarding school events and other relevant parent information can be found on the Parent Portal, time sensitive information such as weather related changes in operating hours is relayed by Remind. We will also notify families via email and the school Facebook page/Parent group page **as we are able to do so** for time sensitive information but this may not always be possible. Parents can request a parent/teacher conference at any time during the school year and we will do our best to accommodate this request within a reasonable time period.

*Please note: Daily operations-related issues for Pre-K Primary students should be communicated through MMCS staff and Operations Director and/or Head of School. Daily operations related issues for Toddler and Wild Hearts students should be communicated through The Garden/Wild Hearts staff and The Garden Operations Director, Kathryn Hall. All admissions, clerical and billing related issues should be communicated through Ellen Graham. Contact information for all administrators is listed on our website. We do ask that any classroom-related concerns or questions are communicated directly to teachers. If any issues are unresolved after meeting with your child's teacher, please direct your questions to school administrators.*

**Hand Washing & Universal Precautions:** Hand washing is the most critical element in reducing the spread of germs. Hands should always be washed upon arrival at the school, whenever

contact is made with bodily discharges, immediately before and after eating, upon returning inside from outdoor play, after using the restroom, and upon leaving the school. Gloves shall be worn by Staff when diapering, when in contact with blood or other body fluids is possible and when cleaning contaminated surfaces. Spills of urine, feces, vomit or blood shall be cleaned from the surfaces first with soap and water and then disinfected with a solution of household bleach and water. Any contaminated material shall be disposed of in a double layer plastic bag with a secure tie.

**Evacuation Plan:** Evacuation escape plans will be posted at each exit door. Class attendance record, emergency information book, cell phone and first aid kit will be taken to the interior hallway/bathroom. All children will be accounted for using the class attendance records so it is imperative that your child is appropriately signed in and out each day. Staff cell phones will be used in the notification of parents and emergency vehicles. Children will get down on the floor and cover their heads. Fire, Shelter in Place and Lockdown Drills will be practiced preparing children. Teachers will lead the children to the safe place with the class attendance records, emergency records, and first aid kit. Another teacher will be responsible to get the cell phones and help any immobile child.

**Emergency Preparedness:** Action will be taken if a person enters the center that is not authorized to pick up a child and/or appears to be intoxicated. Staff should not attempt to physically restrain the individual. Staff cannot refuse access to a legal parent or guardian, but every attempt will be made to discourage the person from leaving with the child. Proper authorities will be immediately notified if the child is taken under these circumstances. Description of the vehicle, license number, and description of the state of the individual will be reported to the authorities. If a child is abducted or missing, the center will notify the parents and authorities immediately. Description of any suspicious persons or vehicles will be reported to the police.

In the case of a power failure, children will remain at the center until parents are notified.

In the case of a bomb threat, children will be escorted to Elliot's on Linden and proper authorities will be notified immediately. Parents will be notified as to where to pick up their child once authorities provide permission for this to occur. Emergency information, child's forms and records, and cell phones will be taken. A First Aid Kit will be maintained and kept in a location not accessible to the children within the program space and will be carried outdoors whenever children and staff leave the building for any reason. First Aid Kits will be taken on any field trips.

Fire escape plans will be posted at each exit door. Class attendance record, emergency information book, cell phone and first aid kit will be taken outside to the playground. All children will be accounted for using the class attendance records for that day. Staff cell phones will be used in the notification of parents and emergency vehicles. Children will be taken to a safe location until parents can pick them up.

Fire drills, shelter in place drills and lockdown drills will be practiced preparing children.

The school is handicap accessible and has a handicapped accessible bathroom. Any further accommodations will be handled on an individual basis.

All employees are required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse. Employees are required to make an oral and a written report. See the Director (s) for more information regarding

the procedure and the information required to be included in such a report. Per the Code, any Mandatory Reporter, who makes a report of child abuse or participates in an investigation of child abuse in good faith, has immunity from any criminal or civil liability.

**Staff Qualifications and Development:** All staff will obtain and maintain a current NC Childcare Background check and CPR/First Aid certificate (Adult, Child, and Infant) and will go through an initial orientation to the school's policies and staff requirements. Included in this initial staff training will be instruction regarding the school's emergency procedures and policies on universal precautions and infectious disease control. Beyond the initial orientation, staff will undergo ongoing training on these policies.

Classroom teachers will be required to have previous relevant experience and education in a related field and/or will possess or be working towards an approved teacher or assistant certification. All Garden classroom staff must complete a minimum of 12 continuing education hours per school year; and undergo training as assigned by the school.

Lead Primary classroom teachers will be hired by the Board of Directors at Moore Montessori Community School and will be required to have a bachelor's degree; AMI or AMS diploma for 3-6 years; NC teaching license or enrollment in lateral entry program. Assistant/Associate Teachers will be required to have previous early childhood experience and will undergo specific Professional Development related to Montessori for their classroom age group.

**Arrival and Dismissals:** Our schools are NOT licensed day care facilities, which means we are required by the state of NC to operate services for children under Kindergarten age for no more than 4 hours per day. Sign in and sign out sheets are provided and must be recorded accurately upon arrival and dismissal daily.

Late arrivals are disruptive to both class and the child. Children should arrive during the allotted drop-off windows and parents should pick-up their child(ren) during the allotted pick-up window. If you arrive outside of your child's specific drop off timeframe, please park at the office and contact Administrators through Remind. If you are unable to arrive on time to pick up your child, please arrange for someone else to pick up for your child (we must have written notification that this person is an approved pick-up for your child before we can release the child to them).

If your child needs to be picked up early due to illness, weather emergency, or other circumstance, it is important you or an approved designated individual are able to come within 30 minutes of being called.

One verbal warning will be given if a child is picked up late, and after that, late fee policy applies. Parents who are consistently late (3 or more times) picking up their child from school may be required to forfeit their child's spot. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure their child is picked up during their assigned pick up time frame at the end of each day. Please review drop-off and pick-up procedures information, which is distributed at the beginning of each school year and follow instructions regarding locations of pick-up and drop-off. Parents must sign the sign-out sheet prior to leaving campus. The school cannot be held officially responsible for any child until parent/teacher contact is made. A child may be checked upon arrival for any communicable diseases, e.g. conjunctivitis or fever.

**Late Policy:** We will follow a three-step policy for chronic late pickup.

- Step 1. Verbal warning;
- Step 2. \$10 per 10 minutes billed to parent account;
- Step 3. Withdrawal of child from the program.

Scheduled and Unscheduled School Closings: The Garden and Wild Hearts Nature School will be closed according to the school calendar posted on the Parent Portal. There will also be no school on days when the Moore County Public Schools are canceled due to bad weather or health related emergencies. When Moore County Public Schools are delayed or dismissed early due to bad weather, school hours will be determined on a case-by case basis.

While we understand that unscheduled changes can be an inconvenience for parents, please understand that liability concerns were taken into account when creating this policy; we must consider our staff's safety and ability to get to school, in addition to the safety of all of our students and families. Some of our staff may also have children enrolled in public schools, leaving them without childcare for days when school is closed.

Make-up days, refunds or prorated tuition are not provided for missed days due to inclement weather/health related emergencies, or scheduled holidays or school cancellations. School closings and delays for The Garden Toddler Community/Wild Hearts Nature School will follow those of the Moore County Public Schools without exception. MMCS may be able to determine openings on a case-by-case basis, but The Garden/Wild Hearts is unable to make any exceptions to this policy. To determine if the Moore County Public Schools are closed or delayed, check the news or Internet or call them for direct inquiries. There may or may not be a separate announcement for The Garden/Wild Hearts.

Physical Behavior/Injury & Incident Policy: In compliance with NAEYC confidentiality guidelines, staff will maintain complete confidentiality of all children involved when notifying parents that their child has been hurt by another child. Biting, hitting, scratching or pushing are all common behaviors among children birth to three years of age, and sometimes beyond. At the Garden, we believe that by understanding the developmental stages of the children in our care and their individual needs, we can prevent many behaviors by adapting the environment (this could mean utilizing parent provided bite sticks/jewelry, adding or replacing toys and materials, rearranging furniture, adjusting the schedule or routine, adjusting the teacher's approach, providing new and different opportunities, etc. We will not assign punishments and/or shame children in our care for any reason.

We also know that even with all our experience and knowledge of child development, many things can contribute to this behavior and that we may not be able to prevent all occurrences. We understand that children hurting other children is one of the most common and most difficult behaviors to deal with in group child care settings because of its effect on everyone involved, which is magnified due to the severity of the injury that can occur in certain circumstances such as biting and scratching. It can occur without warning, can be difficult to defend against, and, understandably so, provokes strong emotional responses in everyone involved. For most children, this is a passing phase. Pre-verbal toddlers may try biting or other physical behaviors out as a form of communication. Young children are in the process of

learning appropriate social behavior. For other children, biting, or other physically harming behavior is a persistent and chronic problem. This and other challenging behaviors may occur for a variety of reasons: teething, frustration, boredom, developing language skills, stress or change in the school or home environment, a need for emotional release, feeling threatened, or to feel a sense of power. In order to alleviate some of the triggers for this type of behavior, our staff maintains the following practices that research has shown to help prevent incidences.

- Quality relationships: Staff develops nurturing relationships with the children and gets to know each child individually. Staff is given many opportunities for professional development to help s/he learn ways to build quality relationships with the children.
- Environmental influences on child's behaviors: Children are given opportunities to work individually and in both small and large groups; there is a variety of engaging work available, appropriate behaviors are modeled by the teachers, who maintain an environment that is quiet and productive which can be very calming to a struggling child; and staff are trained to be very aware of and willing to help a child that is feeling overwhelmed.
- Targeted social-emotional supports: Children have a daily routine that they follow which allows for freedom and the opportunity to meet their individual needs. Children learn early how to navigate classroom transitions in a way that helps them build confidence and alleviate stress. Adults discuss emotions/feelings through books and other work and teach strategies such as yoga to help children learn to calm themselves. At The Garden, we use the following steps in order to prevent biting and other physically harming behavior and to keep all of the children in the classroom safe and ensure that everyone's needs are met consistently.

1. Action Plan Before harming occurs: Create an environment which meets the developmental needs of the children. Monitor and supervise all children while working and/or playing. Observe and take thoughtful notes regarding the behavior and development of all children in our care. Redirect in situations where any physically harmful incidents may occur. Closely observe the children in question and determine possible causes, make changes in response. Maintain an environment that elicits calm, thoughtful behavior.

2. If a child is harmed: The child who harmed another child is calmly removed from the area, using simple words such as "biting hurts," and taken under direct supervision by a staff member for the remainder of the day. A second staff member immediately attends to the child who was harmed, comforting him/her and applying first aid as needed. The parents of both children are notified and an incident report is filled out for the child who was harmed, a behavior report for the child who hurt another child and each parent should sign off on these reports at pickup that day. We will avoid any immediate response that reinforces the harmful behavior. Caring attention will be focused on the child who was harmed. The child displaying challenging behavior will then be shadowed by a staff member and any other attempts at any other harmful behavior will be stopped as they occur. The child will be talked to on a level which s/he can understand. "I can see that you want that truck, but I can't let you hurt him." The child will be redirected to other work/play and staff will closely monitor, supervise and observe this child to determine

possible causes of the behavior. Notes will be taken and filed in the behavior log. Classroom staff will report all incidents to the Operations Director on the day of the incident to review the context of the incident, whether adequate supervision was present and whether something the school environment contributed to the incident. Classroom staff will meet with administration as soon as possible to determine the cause and discuss preventative measures to be implemented immediately.

3. If harmful behaviors continue when staff have performed all strategies and responses per school protocol: Classroom staff will meet with administrators on a routine basis for advice, support and strategy planning. Staff will meet to determine whether further intervention is required. Parents will be involved in the planning of any intervention according to the Discipline and Discharge Policy. Outcomes of these conferences will be discussed, and any changes will be made at home and in the classroom. A written plan of action on the Behavior Intervention Plan form should be produced and carried out, signed by all adults providing care for the children involved (this may include babysitters, nannies, substitute teachers, etc. This will ensure that all adults are on the same page and that the children are receiving consistent responses to their behaviors.

- Staff will note and chart every occurrence, including attempts, and indicate location, time, other children involved and their behaviors, staff present, and circumstances in the behavior log.
- Staff will shadow children who indicate a tendency to bite in order to head off biting situations before they occur, teach non-biting responses to situations and reinforce appropriate behavior.
- Administrators and teachers will work together to adapt the program to better fit the needs of all the children in the classroom.
  - If teachers, parents and administrators are working cooperatively together and providing consistent attention to the matter, and they still agree that the child needs more support, The Garden will hire an extra staff member or utilize a current support staff member for the classroom for maximum period of 1 month in order to provide shadowing support for a child who struggles with consistent physically harmful behavior (parents will be billed at a per hour rate for this additional employee). If the child is still showing harmful behavior after that time period, we may implement the following steps if appropriate to the situation: the parent joins the child to become the child's shadow support, a classroom placement change is made for either the child who is exhibiting harmful behavior or the child(ren) who are being harmed (an early transition and change in environment for children stuck in a behavior pattern, can be helpful if the children are showing other signs of readiness including mastering toilet learning, completing classroom works, showing independence in self-care and communication skills) other classroom parents of children not involved are notified of the challenges and the schools' efforts and reminded of our policy to continue to work with the children involved. Staff will work together as partners with the parents of both children to keep all informed and develop a joint strategy for change. In cases where staff or parents feel any child has a special need or is exhibiting behavior beyond normal development, the child will be recommended for a developmental evaluation by a trained therapist. Moore County Schools offers free evaluations for speech or other developmental concerns, or the parent may choose to



speak with their pediatrician and obtain a referral for a private evaluation. Parents should provide documentation of the evaluation to the school and follow up with recommendations from the therapist as needed. Physical behavior is very typical and common especially in group settings with children under the age of 3 but can sometimes be a symptom of a separate condition. If a child is diagnosed with a special need, The Garden may require a parent to hire a therapist or aide to attend school with the child in order to ensure the safety and progress of all of the children in the classroom. Expulsion/withdrawal of a child from our program will only take place if it is deemed in the best interest of the child exhibiting the behavior, the integrity of the school, and the other children enrolled. If the teachers have exhausted all efforts, if a parent is uncooperative with the action plan or shows a lack of support or effort for their child or the school's efforts, The Garden maintains the right to withdraw the child from the program. If the behavior is consistent and all parties are unable to come up with the needed support and solution for the problem, the child may be withdrawn from the program without a right to refund or exemption from the tuition agreement.

- Toilet Learning & The Montessori Approach: All parents will be provided with a copy of the article "On the Topic of Toileting" by Catherine MacTamaney and a copy of Toilet Awareness, a book by Sarah Moudry, upon request, which reflects our approach to toileting in the Montessori classroom. It is important for the child's sake that parents are consistent with the classroom approach to toileting so that children can be successful and ready to "graduate" to the next classroom on time. We ask that parents send children to school in thick cotton training pants (rather than pull-ups) until they are independently using the toilet. Consistent communication with teachers during this time is critical.
  
- Outdoor Play Policy: Children will play outdoors daily. We will use the weather safety chart available on the website to determine weather safety for outdoor play for all students and closings for Wild Hearts. The following actions will be taken based on the chart:
  1. Wild Hearts will announce closings, early dismissals or delayed starts no later than 8am daily if conditions are predicted to be in the RED zones.
  2. Staff will bring children indoors if real-time conditions change or differ from predictions and enter the RED zones during school hours; depending on the amount of time left in the school day, Wild Hearts parents may be contacted for early dismissal.
  3. When conditions are or are predicted to be in the YELLOW zones, staff will take the following safety actions for COLD weather:
    - a) Ensure children are fully covered with appropriate clothing (gloves, winter coats, snowsuits - if applicable, warm hats, warm socks and rain or snow boots, warm layers underneath. If parents fail to send the appropriate clothing with their child to school, the parent will be contacted to bring appropriate clothing and/or pick their child up from school while s/he remains in the office.
    - b) Plan and promote activities that involve movement; take indoor breaks for story-time or sedentary activities as needed.
  4. When conditions are or are predicted to be in the YELLOW zones, staff will take the following safety actions for HOT weather:
    - a) Ensure children are appropriately dressed and prepared for the weather (sun hats, lightweight clothing, sunscreen, bug spray, swimsuits or moisture-wick clothing. If parents fail to send the

appropriate clothing/products with their child to school, the parent will be contacted to bring appropriate clothing/products and/or pick their child up from school while s/he remains in the office.

b) Plan and promote activities that involve water play and/or keep children shaded areas only; indoor breaks for story-time or sedentary activities as needed.

c) Provide consistent reminders for mandatory water breaks every 20 minutes. If parents fail to send in a water bottle, cups of water will be provided, but please try to remember to send in a water bottle daily!

5. When thunderstorms, lightening, tornadoes, hurricanes, tropical storms or any other extreme weather conditions/advisories (that are considered dangerous to be outdoors in OR creates hazardous road conditions) are predicted at a percentage higher than 50% during school hours, Wild Hearts staff will make a call for delayed start, early dismissal or closing by 8am daily and parents will be notified by Remind, email & updates posted to the Facebook page.

6. Students will play outdoors in rainy weather and children are expected to be sent to school with the appropriate gear needed to participate in outdoor programming. Gear includes rubber/plastic rain boots (or insulated snow boots for colder weather), hooded water-resistant coat or jacket, umbrella (if desired), water-resistant clothing (especially pants), change of clothes (in case of mud), small towel, and rain hat (if desired). A specific Gear List is provided for Wild Hearts students for each season and parents are required to purchase the required gear so that children can attend comfortably in all conditions. There is a lot to be learned in the rain and outdoor programming will continue in these conditions. If parents fail to send the appropriate clothing/products with their child to school, the parent will be contacted to bring appropriate clothing/products and/or pick their child up from school while s/he remains in the office.

Please note that this Handbook is a living document and policies are subject to change. All policies listed here are subject to annual approval; changes will be presented as they are made and parents will be notified of any changes made and asked to sign stating that they have read and agree to any changes. Should you have any questions, requests for additions or edits of this document prior to signing, please contact us.

### **Enrollment and Refund Policy:**

#### **MMCS Toddler + PreK Afternoon Adventure Club**

*Please note that all enrollments for the 24-25 school year Montessori Toddler Community and PreK Afternoon Adventure Club operations are contingent upon final TOSP rezoning permit approval. Fees and deposits are fully refundable if you are unable to remain enrolled due to rezoning permit delays. The Garden and MMCS will make every effort to ensure that all permits are in place at the start of the enrollment term, but cannot be held responsible for opening delays related to TOSP rules, regulations and permit approvals.*

#### **In times of Local/State/Federal Emergency Status**

The Garden will follow state and local guidance in regards to any changes we make to our policies relating to emergency situations (including health related emergencies as happened with COVID-19). If at any point in time, your ability to remain enrolled is affected by a change in policy/practice, as a courtesy to the school, we ask that you provide as much notice as possible if you do not intend to have your child participate. Registration fees and deposits are and will remain non-refundable regardless of reason for withdrawal.

By enrolling in and agreeing to the terms, policies, protocols, and conditions listed in this Handbook, parents are accepting responsibility for the full-term commitment and agreeing to all handbook information. The Garden operates within very small margins and is fully supported by tuition and fees. For this reason, we are unable to refund fees for unexpected or unscheduled closings due to emergency related closures, weather-related issues that affect student's ability to participate in outdoor activities for most of the morning or for any other unexpected reason.

*Please sign the community handbook agreement provided to you to verify that you have read and agree to all terms, policies, practices, and other items listed here, please note that this is a living document and policies are subject to change; changes will be presented as they are made, and parents will be notified of any changes made and asked to sign stating that they have read and agree to any changes.*

*Should you have any questions, requests for additions or edits of this document prior to signing, please contact us.*