



American Systemic Montessori School for Children 3-16

English and Spanish Immersion Children's House, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, Adolescence

Handbook for Tenth Year, January 2022

School Motto

See for yourself!

School Purpose

To teach children to learn from the world.

Mission

Our Mission is to create a community in which we share processes of self-construction, learning, and discovery with the aim of acting from a place of authenticity.

Profile of the Graduates

Our graduates will be capable of recognizing depth, wisdom, authenticity, connection, and understanding, because they will have experienced them repeatedly throughout their schooling. They will seek out that which brings them closer to their deepest sense of self and to others.

Beliefs

City Country School is founded on the belief that children learn by doing, making and experiencing for themselves, with the support and guidance of dedicated and passionate adults in rigorously prepared environments of learning and as a community of learners.

City Country School Community

A community worthy of the name “operate[s] richly at many evolutionary levels, dedicating itself less to any evolutionary level than to the process itself.” (Kegan, The Evolving Self)

When you choose a school for your child, you become a member of a school community. City Country School aims to create a positive, vibrant, committed and active developmental community.

What makes a school community positive and vibrant? First, we think that the school has to work well on a professional level: it must be reliable, organized and effective. Second, the school must be a safe place for all: everyone must feel physically, emotionally and psychologically safe. Children must feel safe, cared for and respected. Parents must feel that their children are safe and that their family’s privacy is respected. The staff and faculty must feel respected by the parents, as well as by the children and by the school administration. Everyone must feel that their doubts, fears and problems will be heard and treated with respect, patience and good humor. For this to happen we need open lines of communication. Parents need to trust the school and the school needs to trust parents.

Another factor we think is important to creating a solid community is a sense of purpose. Children need to feel that they are learning many interesting, important and useful things that connect them to the real world and that will help them become strong and capable adults. They must feel that each of them has a part in this learning community, an important role in the school. Faculty and staff must feel that they are doing important work that is valued and recognized. Parents must feel that the school’s mission is important and that they are a part of making it a reality.

The school community is a part of every child’s experience and education, a principal source of the child’s understanding of society. Whether or not a school culture, of which the school community is a part, teaches values explicitly, it is shaping a child’s values every day in many ways. A school culture that welcomes the different contributions of its members, teaches openness. A school culture that respects each family’s and individual’s quiriness, teaches an appreciation of diversity and tolerance. A school culture that recognizes its own mistakes, teaches honesty and integrity. A school culture that is always striving to improve, teaches excellence. A school culture that readily innovates, teaches creativity. A school culture that adapts itself to the needs of its members, teaches flexibility. A school culture that creates and values its traditions, teaches the importance of ritual and tradition. A school culture that honors important milestones in the lives of its members, teaches the importance of those moments and the role that community plays in an individual’s life. A school culture that enjoys and celebrates nature, teaches the importance of nature. A school culture that is playful, teaches the importance of play. A school culture that can laugh at itself, teaches humor and humanity. A school culture that is empathic, teaches forgiveness and mercy. A school culture that does not permit conflict to create factions, teaches peacemaking and tolerance. A shared school culture, teaches cohesion and understanding. A school culture in which people collaborate, teaches teamwork.

The Most Basic Questions, Answered:

What is Montessori?

Montessori is a child-centered pedagogy designed to help children with their task of self-construction as they develop through the planes of development, from childhood to maturity. City Country School makes full use of the Montessori pedagogy, including the rigorously prepared environment, the three-period lesson, close observation, concrete didactic materials, freedom of choice, freedom of movement, the three-hour uninterrupted work cycle, long works (projects), going-out, an emphasis on community, independent, as well as collaborative work, trained Montessori adults, small group lessons, direct and indirect instruction, mixed-age groups.

What is Systemics?

Systemics is a theoretical framework, based on the work of Bert Hellinger, by which to understand the relationship among and between different systems that must work together, in this case the family's system and the school's system. City Country School relies on the insights of this framework in all aspects of the school, including teacher training, parent education, student counseling and team development. The school began introducing a Systemics approach in 2017.

Why is the school American?

The founder, though born in Madrid, was educated in the United States and wanted to create an American Montessori school for her children, part of the graduating Adolescent class of 2020.

How are English and Spanish taught at City Country School?

At City Country School English is taught in an immersion English environment by trained Montessori guides who are native English-speakers. Spanish is taught in an immersion Spanish environment by trained Montessori guides who are native Spanish-speakers. Children's House and Elementary are bilingual programs, with equal time of instruction in each language. The Adolescent Program is in English, with the exception of Spanish Language and Culture, and Creative Expression.

City Country School and The Three Essential Questions

Uniqueness cannot be predicted or planned. Educating the individual toward self-actualization means educating him without any ready-made models that he must try to emulate. -Zvi Lamm

The Why, How and What of a City Country School Education

There are three essential components of an educational project: the purpose (the why), the theory of instruction (the how), and the curriculum (the what).

The Why: Purpose

Traditional public schooling defines the purpose of education as socializing the young for specific roles in society. Traditional religious and elite private schools define the purpose of education as creating virtuous and cultured individuals who understand the world through a particular religious or cultural lens. Montessori education is firmly in the tradition of developmental pedagogies educating for the self-actualization of the individual. In this view, an educated person is a person with the ability “to relate to knowledge in a positive, critical and productive manner” (Harpaz): a person who is connected to the world.

A good life is a meaningful life with a genuine connection to the world. City Country School’s education is holistic, it considers all aspects of development: physical, aesthetic, social, emotional, spiritual and cognitive. It is also holistic in its commitment to making learning whole: to bringing together the paradoxes that make up the educational effort and to acknowledging the necessary and fertile tensions within which we work and live. We strive to unite heart with head, facts with feelings, theory with practice, teaching with learning; we are cultivating “a view of the world in which opposites are joined, so that we can see the world clearly and see the world whole” (Palmer 69).

The How: Theory of Instruction

Montessori was a developmental educator whose materials, classroom customs, presentations and guidelines, tailored to the developmental stage of the child, shape our approach during classroom hours. These include the rigorously prepared environment, the three-period lesson, close observation, concrete didactic materials, freedom of choice, freedom of movement, the three-hour uninterrupted work cycle, long works (or projects), going-out, an emphasis on community, independent, as well as collaborative work, trained Montessori adults, small group lessons, direct and indirect instruction, mixed-age groups.

The specific style of instruction at City Country School is a direct result of our ideas about the nature of learning itself and our definition of the educated person. The appropriate classroom climate for developmental learning is one of freedom. Thus, at City Country School, the students choose their own work and are free to move through the school. At CCS knowledge is not seen as absolute, nor is it thought that the adult has all the answers, nor that there is necessarily one right answer to most questions. In the classroom there are many sources of information available (never only one), there are many ways to solve problems using different concrete materials (never only one), there are many ways to respond to ideas and to demonstrate understanding (never only one).

One of the tensions ever-present in developmental education is that between the developmental planes or stages, as described by Maria Montessori among others, and the child, who is always a unique individual. Montessori viewed the developing child as going through a series of transformations, each stage characterized by the emergence and disappearance of special potentialities or sensitivities. This series of transformations is a natural, normal, spontaneous process through four “planes of development”: the first from birth to six years, the second from six to twelve, the third from twelve to eighteen, and the fourth from eighteen to twenty-four. A child progresses from sensory motor to abstraction to moral development. Development takes place when the individual interacts with their own environment as a result of their own needs to be active, to be curious, to relate to others. Montessori is a child-centered pedagogy designed to

help children with their task of self-construction as they develop through these planes, from childhood to maturity. And, though we speak about the general characteristics shared by children in the different planes of development, we must never lose sight of the uniqueness of each individual child.

The What: Curriculum

Montessori recommended providing "the world," in all its complexity and sensorial richness. What Montessori wished to provide the students to look at, and to struggle to create meaning around, both together and alone, are the great things of such power and grace that humanity has been looking at them, without plumbing the depths of their mystery, since the beginning of time: the seashell, the sky, human language, rocks, numbers, flowers, sunlight, food, water. As we try to understand the great thing that is there, perhaps the tree we observe, we struggle to understand ourselves. Questions we ask of the tree, are questions we must ask of ourselves. If, instead of studying the great thing itself, one studies a textbook about trees, neatly labeled and explained, one will find only answers, without the questions. We rob the great things of their power when we reduce them to definitions to be memorized. These great things shape us as we begin to look very closely at them and struggle to understand them without the filter of the expert telling us everything about them before we have had the opportunity to question them ourselves. That is why our teaching is called a questioning pedagogy, while traditional educations are called answering pedagogies.

Caveat Emptor: Choosing the Appropriate School

Our questioning approach does not come without a cost; it is not possible to foster critical thinking and, at the same time, submission to authority. A mind motivated by curiosity is different to a mind that wishes to stockpile facts and sacred information. It is not possible to cultivate, at the same time, both a questioning and a non-questioning mind (Lamm). A creative response to life and the acceptance of dogma are in conflict, both in school and in life. Parents must decide what type of mind they wish to encourage in their child and choose the appropriate school.

The Montessori Prepared Environment

For optimal development...a prepared environment would be less a school than an eco-system supporting the evolution of the psychological individual, an environment to which the self could attach, sustained by optimal conditions of support, until it was ready to let go and be born into the next stage of development. (Baker, Haines and Kahn, "Optimal Developmental Outcomes: The Social, Moral, Cognitive, and Emotional Dimensions of a Montessori Education")

City Country School is a developmental organization. How could it be otherwise, founded, as it was, on the developmental pedagogy of Maria Montessori? By developmental organization we mean that every single person in our school community—children, adolescents, teachers, support staff, parents, families, teams—are in a moment of growth that requires “relations and human contexts which spontaneously support [them] through the sometimes difficult process of growth and change” (Kegan, *The Evolving Self*). Those relations and human contexts provide growth environments for optimal development, and those growth environments are, by necessity, different over the course of our lifespan. As trained Montessorians our expertise is in creating developmentally appropriate holding environments in which our students find the support they need to work at their growth edge, the challenges they need progress through to their next edge, and the community to welcome their new, grown self.

A child in each stage of development has particular abilities and interests. The Montessori prepared environment is simply an environment prepared especially for the interests and abilities of children at a particular stage of development, without anything extraneous or distracting. Every part of the child’s environment can be an opportunity: a lost opportunity, or an opportunity that is maximized. If we keep foremost in our minds that a child is always learning, then we can understand that every moment is an opportunity to learn, and that the entire school must be a prepared environment: the hallways, the bathrooms, the dining room, the kitchen, the classrooms, the workshop, the outdoor area.

The prepared environment includes a structure that is seldom discussed in schools, but is of paramount importance: time. Clock time reigns supreme in most schools where the day is divided into fifty-minute segments marked by the whims of a bell. At City Country School we try to help the children find and follow deep impulses of learning that will not be determined by a clock, but by an individual psychological time that only they can understand. To help children connect with their own psychological time they must be permitted to choose their own work and work for as long as they wish to, without interruptions. They must be permitted to continue with a work for day, weeks, even months. Ample clock time permits the child to forget about looking at the clock, and permits them to contact their own connection to the work, their own rhythm and their own process. A child can be creative and insightful in their work, if they can relax.

City Country School's Statements of Learning

If we regard truth as something handed down from authorities on high, the classroom will look like a dictatorship.

If we regard truth as a fiction determined by personal whim, the classroom will look like anarchy.

If we regard truth as emerging from a complex process of mutual inquiry, the classroom will look like a resourceful and interdependent community.

-Parker Palmer

- Learning is growth.
- The product of learning is understanding.
- The product of understanding is passion.
- Learning is interlocked with the environment: with the people, the objects, the values, the beliefs, the hopes and the fears, that surround it.
- Human beings learn with pleasure and joy, in a state called flow, when they voluntarily participate in work that challenges them and requires them to work deeply.
- Learning requires focus; focused concentration requires intrinsic motivation.
- We learn with our whole selves; when you separate the hand from the mind "it is the mind that suffers" (Sennet).
- A child is always learning something. We must be very careful of this fact. When a child is doing frustrating, boring, confusing work, what they learn is that learning is boring, frustrating and confusing, that they are not smart enough to learn, that they do not care about learning.
- Different people have different types of intelligences (and therefore different learning needs) in different proportions: spatial, linguistic, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic and existential (Gardner). School must recognize and provide deep work for all the intelligences.
- Learning flourishes where there is time, trust, respect, choice, freedom, understanding and uninterrupted work time. Useful learning dries up in the presence of tension, fear, boredom, confusion, distraction and rigidity.
- The apparatus of school "learning"--tests, drills, memorizations, reduction of knowledge into seemingly-unrelated bits, regimented action, time constraints, constant interruption of work--interferes with deep work.
- Every culture and society represses individual development. It is one of roles of education to struggle alongside the child against this repression.
- Children learn best when they are doing something real and meaningful.

City Country School Aims

Understanding is a complex process that is itself not well understood.

-Howard Gardner

Who knows what the world will look like in twenty years? We do not. We are preparing children for a world well beyond the capabilities of our imaginings. This does not mean that we know nothing, in fact we know a good many things which we have lost sight of, or been distracted from, by our new high-tech world.

We know that in order to participate in a civic community, we must also understand ourselves as part of a smaller community of real people, who can come together to question, learn and solve problems. Human beings are deeply collaborative and it is during their years of education that they develop empathy for others and the ability to welcome and understand diversity. To develop real empathy and collaborative skills children need to be present with one another, without the presence of technological gadgets. We do know that collaboration on a global scale will be asked of the next generations and we can imagine the consequences of an inability to collaborate effectively.

We also know that to understand something deeply or to produce something of extraordinary quality requires enormous focus and concentration. It requires deep work and deep work is at a severe disadvantage in a technopoly (to use Neil Postman's coinage), "because it [deep work] builds on values like quality, craftsmanship, and mastery that are decidedly old-fashioned and non-technological... Deep work is exiled in favor of more distracting high-tech behaviors" (Newport 69). The ability to work deeply is becoming increasingly rare, "and therefore increasingly valuable" (Newport 71).

We know that there are great human abilities that cannot be duplicated by computers: meaning making, metaphoric thought, pattern creation, design, story writing, art making, systems thought. We know that our deeply human problems will only be solved by humans capable of deep work.

City Country School is committed to educating children to live and flourish in the real world today, as it is, and, at the same time, to helping them cultivate what they will need to make it better: a rich inner world, intuition, creativity, capacity for rapture and deep focus and chutzpah.

These are the aims of City Country School, accompanied by a brief explanation of how the aims are supported in the school:

1. To create a strong collaboration with parents and a warm and supportive school community. To do this successfully the child must feel that school and home are connected. This requires that both the school and the family embrace difference, be tolerant of mistakes, be forgiving of misunderstandings, be supportive of one another's goals, speak respectfully and affectionately of one another, speak honestly to one another, have high expectations of one another. It is essential that parents trust the school and communicate that trust to their child.
2. To help the child develop a taste and capacity for deep work. A taste for deep work develops from the repeated experience of pleasure that accompanies deep work: pleasure from the work itself (flow) and pleasure from the results (understanding). It is in the area of a child's concentration, autonomy and intrinsic motivation that Maria Montessori's insights are most consistently supported in contemporary neurological and cognitive research. "The Montessori philosophy is consistent with the theoretical and practical implications of optimal experience (flow) theory"; "furthermore, Montessori's insights about motivation are in line with contemporary perspectives on motivation, including goal theory" (Rathunde et al. 2005). Deep work has been a focus of Montessori pedagogy since its inception one hundred years ago.
3. To help the child learn to ask, and seek answers, to fertile questions. The ability to ask questions, to sit with ambiguity, to challenge one's own perspective, to dare to go deeper, takes years of practice; and

that practice begins in school. City Country School has a questioning rather than an answering approach to knowledge and experience. We place value on real observation, deep understanding and personal experience. For example: we do not tell children that they are alright as soon as they fall down, we ask them if they are alright. If they are frightened we support and reassure them, but we cannot tell them that they are alright, *que no pasa nada*. We acknowledge to the child that we do not have all the answers, that perhaps there are many different answers. We help the child find multiple and varied ways to search for the answers.

4. To help the child realize that learning is to be involved and to construct understanding. Our society believes overwhelmingly that understanding is the same as knowing; that learning is the same as committing to memory. It is only through years of practice that children come to understand that, as Piaget said, “to understand is to invent.” And to invent, children need many, many experiences that challenge them to grow and to connect what is in books with what is in them; to construct “a story that works” (Perkins) for themselves.
5. To help the child discover the interconnectedness of seemingly unrelated things. The curriculum must support a unified vision of human knowledge. It is also important to help children see the deep structure of the different disciplines; “grasping the structure of a subject is understanding it in a way that permits many other things to be related to it meaningfully. To learn structure, in short, is to learn how things are related” (Bruner 7). A spiral curriculum such as the Montessori curriculum, allows students to revisit earlier learning, deepening their understanding in progressively more complex and sophisticated ways.
6. To foster in the child a mastery mindset. A mastery mindset values long term goals of process, enrichment and self-improvement over short-term goals of performance. Children with a mastery mindset (also known as a growth mindset) believe that their intelligence grows with their effort. Research demonstrates (Carol Dweck, et al.) that children with this mindset are more successful in school and in their adult lives than children with a performance mindset. By not giving grades at City Country School, children are unable to seek judgment of their short-term work and must fall back on a more long-term, learning-goals approach. The mastery mindset is cultivated at City Country School by helping the student feel they are a legitimate member of the learning community, by helping the student feel they can succeed, by helping the student feel that their competency will grow with effort, and by ensuring that the student is doing work that is meaningful and has value.
7. To allow the child to develop an internal locus of evaluation. Instead of relying on the judgment of others about the quality of their work or their actions, the students at City Country School are encouraged to evaluate themselves, to struggle to understand the quality of their own work and actions. Never receiving grades makes it difficult for students to become dependent on external judgement. City Country School seeks to cultivate task involvement over ego involvement. Task involvement is “the most intensive state of unity between the subject who is learning and the subject being studied” (Harpaz 2016), ego involvement is “a form of internal motivation that is extrinsic and controlling, and as such is detrimental to interest and to task involvement” (Ryan and Deci, 267).
8. To enable the child to see mistakes as learning. The Montessori didactic materials are non-judgmental, guilt-free and self-correcting; there are no mistakes, only the gradual elimination of wrong turns on the way to success. Using the materials helps children learn to recognize mistakes for what they are: a necessary step toward understanding. As the physicist Niels Bohr said, “An expert is a person who has made all the mistakes that can be made in a very narrow field.”

9. To value and preserve the child's sense of wonder and awe. We worry a lot at CCS about the tendency in schools and society to cram the wonders of human invention into children's minds so fast and so forcibly that there is no awe left at all by the time they leave school! School should be careful not to spoil things; if we wish children to grow up to love painting, poetry and reading, we must be careful not to turn them into drudgery. We should offer gifts without conditions: poetry for the sake of poetry, songs for the sake of songs, stories for the sake of stories, books for the sake of books. As Gloria Steinem said, "We won't have laughter and kindness and poetry and pleasure at the end of any revolution unless we have laughter and kindness and poetry and pleasure along the way."
10. To help the child recognize their own needs. A peaceful school environment in which the child is permitted to be at the center of their experience helps them understand their own needs. The child is not told when to use the bathroom, when to drink water, when to begin working on a material or when to stop. At City Country School we believe that more complex self-knowing will grow out of a strong foundation. That a child who understands his own needs will later be more successful at distinguishing true needs--such as the need for adequate sleep and the need to create a pleasant home--, from harmful wants disguised as needs--such as the need to drink to excess with friends or the need to impress others.
11. To help the child see that they are capable of surpassing their own expectations, limitations, fears. You learn that you can overcome your own self-beliefs by overcoming them. A child needs to be challenged and supported to surpass what they think are their limits. Collaborative, big-project work creates the conditions in which children can safely stretch themselves and discover new abilities and confidence. The long hikes and camping experiences that City Country plans for the Elementary and Adolescent groups are places where many children will come face to face with some of their fears and limits, and overcome them.

A Word about Motivation

Maria Montessori describes the moment of greatest revelation in her career as the moment that she observed a three-year-old child working with a set of solid insets, taking them out of their respective holes and replacing them. The child was so absorbed in the work that she did not stir when Montessori lifted the entire armchair in which she sat and set it on the table, nor when she had the other children in the room sing songs. "I counted forty-four repetitions; when at last she ceased, it was quite independent of any surrounding stimuli which might have distracted her, and she looked around with a satisfied air, almost as if waking from a refreshing nap. I think my never-to-be-forgotten impression was that experienced by one who has made a discovery" (The Advanced Montessori Method, 46). What Montessori observed is the same phenomenon whose discovery made the psychologist Csikszentmihaly famous: flow. In an interview in 1990 he explained: "Flow refers to an optimal state of immersed concentration in which attention is centered, distractions are minimized, and the person attains an enjoyable give-and-take with his or her activity. In this state, people report that they lose track of time and their daily problems, forget about hunger and fatigue, and feel well-matched to the activity at hand."

In every Montessori classroom, in every classroom in City Country School, there is a quasi-religious respect for the child's concentration. Maria Montessori set up her Children's House environment in such a way as to provide daily undisturbed flow experiences to small children. A child who experiences this type of autonomous pleasure in school, will be motivated to continue to seek it out, and will be well on the road to a satisfying life.

Children can be coerced into compliance by external motivators; they can be coerced into working hard in school with the help of the carrots and sticks of reward (praise and grades) and punishment, but it will not be enough to lead to mastery and contentment in life. What is the difference between engagement

(autonomy/intrinsic motivation) and compliance (coercion/extrinsic motivation)? “The first can get you through the day, but only the latter will get you through the night” (Csikszentmihalyi).

Discipline and Consequences

Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes. -Mahatma Gandhi

At City Country School we cultivate what Aristotle called “practical wisdom.” To develop wisdom we need to consider the exception to every rule. The problems in the world are so ambiguous and poorly defined, the context so continually shifting, that there are no easy answers and no absolute rules. When we apply rules, rather than understand circumstances, we stop thinking. Rules and pre-established responses annul thought. Dependence on rules undermines our moral capacity and takes away the opportunity to improvise and learn from our improvisations and the improvisations of others.

Maria Montessori observed that externally imposed discipline was not necessary if the obstacles to the child’s development were removed and the child was provided with the means of developing him/herself:

The person who is developing fully and naturally...arrives at a spiritual equilibrium, in which he is master of his actions...When he is master of himself he is also flexible in his attitude toward others, and capable of adaptation to the wishes and requirements of others, and of “give and take.” In this consists the discipline of our schools...This self-ordered soul does not need discipline from outside itself. Hitherto man had connected the word “discipline” with the idea of mastery by someone else. Thence we have come to think that the “free” child must be a child abandoned to its own devices. But this is not so. When the order is not imposed from without, but formed naturally from within, discipline and liberty are identical. -Maria Montessori

To support the formation of this ordered soul, the environment and the adults are prepared to receive and guide the child along his or her path. This does not include the use of punishment, which, to our way of understanding, is simply retribution. We are always on the child’s side. With care, love and respect, we help them understand consequences: natural, cultural and social consequences. Our consequences are safe and designed to help children control and understand their impulses.

When we speak of consequences we can tease out three types: natural, cultural and social. Natural consequences are those that result naturally from one’s actions, with no intervention from another person. Picking up a tray too brusquely will have the natural consequence of spilling the water. Cultural consequences are consequences that result when a child does not follow the customs and expectations of their context, for example, if a child is not able to stay with the group on an outing, then the cultural consequence is that the child will not be permitted to go on outings until such time as they demonstrate the ability. A social consequence is the result of a child’s actions within the group. Social consequences are difficult to predict and control, and sometimes require the help of adults. A child who speaks rudely to other children, will eventually lose friends or never make any, which is a very serious consequence requiring adult help.

When it has not been possible to help a child develop the inner discipline necessary to function within the culture of the school, the school has no choice but to put into effect the consequences laid out in its Disciplinary Code.

The Children's House: The First Plane of Development

The child from 3-6 years old is a conscientious worker, a factual, sensorial explorer, sensitive to order and language acquisition and seeking independence and mastery. The pedagogical implications of this are that the three-to-six year-old child needs an ordered, classified, attractive environment; opportunities for sensorial exploration; opportunities to practice life routines; opportunities for endless repetition; a language-rich environment; disciplined adult models; a class community in which they are welcome and included; and independent cycles of work. The classroom environment is set-up in such a way as to provide children with the greatest measure of freedom within which to pursue their own development: "...the secret of the free development of the child consist... in organizing for them the means necessary for their internal nourishment..." (The Advanced Montessori Method, 47). The central tenet of Montessori's Children's House is that the child's work--concentration, order, coordination, autonomy, respect--leads to self-mastery.

The work appropriate for the child's developmental needs is the work the child chooses freely:

They choose the objects they prefer; and such preference is dictated by the internal needs of psychical growth. Each child occupies himself with each object chosen for as long as he wishes; and this desire corresponds to the needs of the intimate maturation of the spirit, a process which demands persevering and prolonged exercise. No guide, no teacher can divine the intimate need of each pupil, and the time of maturation necessary to each; but only leave the child free and all this will be revealed to us under the guidance of nature (The Advanced Montessori Method, 60).

The classroom environment in Children's House is peaceful and aesthetic. Nothing about the Montessori classroom environment is accidental:

The spiritual school puts no limits to the beauty of its environment, save economical limits. No ornament can distract a child really absorbed in his task; on the contrary, beauty both promotes concentration of thought and offers refreshment to the tired spirit.... Furniture for children... should be light, not only that they may be easily carried about by childish arms, but because their very fragility is of educational value. The same consideration leads us to give children china plates and glass drinking-vessels, for these objects become the denouncers of rough, disorderly and undisciplined movements. Thus the child is led to correct himself, and he accordingly trains himself not to knock against, overturn, and break things; softening his movements more and more, he gradually becomes their perfectly free and self-possessed director (The Advanced Montessori Method, 93).

The City Country School Children's House is a complete prepared environment for children three to six years old. Children's House is where the child learns to know and to trust his or her environment, to be part of a community, to act upon the surroundings, to find his or her concentration, to experience the pleasure of work and to become autonomous. The child develops these skills by interacting with an environment especially prepared for the child's development by trained Montessori adults who support that development and mediate the environment, presenting the materials and accompanying the child as needed. The classroom encourages freedom within limits, and a sense of order.

The pleasure of the work in the Montessori classroom is its own reward. Children enjoy uninterrupted blocks of work time during which they choose their own work with the help and guidance of the trained adult. Freely chosen work develops inner discipline and character. The materials are classified, ordered and sequenced according to the child's stages of development and the particular interests or skills they are designed to serve. This orderly environment provides the child with a sense of security. The entire curriculum, in the form of beautiful materials, is laid out on the shelves of the classroom. Children can see where they are headed by watching the older children who are further along the continuum, and they can see what they have already learned by looking back at what the younger children are working on. They

teach the younger children and learn from the older children. Already in Children's House, the child learns that knowledge is there for the taking, that effort and desire will reveal the secrets.

Areas of the Children's House

Practical Life

Montessori said, "Education is a work of self-organization, by which man adapts himself to the conditions of life. We find the beginnings of self-organization for the child in the works which by us have been considered to the humblest and lowest form of work--the exercises of practical life, the putting of the environment in order. These things coordinate the mind and fix the attention in a simple manner. They are a necessary preparation for subsequent constructive work."

The exercises of Practical Life teach children to operate confidently, competently and with autonomy in their environment, and, at the same time, indirectly prepare them for all other areas of the curriculum by developing order, concentration, coordination and independence. Practical life exercises include pouring, sorting, food preparation, care of self, and care of the environment, as well as care of the self.

Sensorial

The Sensorial materials were designed to help children focus attention on the physical world. They are motives for activity, attracting the children to gain knowledge through the senses. These materials help children perceive distinctions that become increasingly subtle within the material and between materials, from simplest to most complex. The child is asked to take mental note of his/her sensorial perceptions and then categorize and sequence them, bringing together the analytic left part of the brain and the sensorial right part. These whole-brain works are one of the things that characterize Montessori didactic materials. The materials are self-correcting, allowing the child to work independently and at his/her own pace.

The Workshop

Children work with complete autonomy in the Workshop area where they choose what materials they want to work with and how long they want to work. No one comments on the child's work. This is important, because in the Workshop the child loses him/herself to the process and becomes completely absorbed in the task. At the beginning of the year, children will usually have an external "purpose" to their work, for example they will say, "I am making this for Mommy." Or they will show their work to the adults, looking for approval. Because it is meant for someone else, they will be quite self-conscious and will appraise it continually themselves. But, if they use the Workshop enough, the children stop making their work for others and begin to engage their innermost selves in works that are startlingly expressive and personal. Interestingly, the children usually have no interest in keeping these works (to the chagrin of parents), throwing them into the garbage with utter indifference after a day or two. In fact, they often do not recognize their own work, so great was their state of focus as they worked. For children in the first plane of development, work is not about the results, it is about the doing.

Culture

The Cultural area includes geography, botany, physical sciences and zoology. The children use puzzle maps to learn about their own country, as well as other countries. They develop an initial understanding of the difference between living and non-living things, plants and animals, vertebrates and invertebrates.

Mathematics

Montessori mathematics in the Children's House focuses on the decimal system, introducing addition, subtraction, multiplication and division sensorially with the use of tactile didactic materials made of wood and beads. The foundations of geometry are laid with work of the geometric cabinet and geometric solids, as well as other materials.

Language

The Language area offers opportunities for exploration and expansion of the child's spoken and written language. The sensitive period for language is birth to age six. At this young age children absorb language very easily including vocabulary, grammar and syntax. They begin writing spontaneously before they begin to read. Children learn to read and sound out words when they are taught the phonetic sounds of letters.

The Role of the Montessori-Trained Adult

You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself. – Galileo

The Montessori Children's House is designed to keep the children's focus on their work, not on the adults. Adults use quiet voices, material is presented with minimal instruction and the fewest words possible, the lessons are brief. The adult's role is designer of the environment, protector of the child's concentration, conduit between the curriculum and the child, and observer of the child's development. It is by carefully observing the child that the Montessori-trained adult can understand where the child is in their development and provide the best direction for the child. "Teachers occupy just as important a place in a class as a child's mother does at home, and children turn naturally to them for help. The relationship that develops is less personal than the mother-child relationship, but a positive tie between teacher and child is the only satisfactory basis for education. For this reason Montessori called education a technique of love" (Mario Montessori Jr., 25).

Elementary: Cosmic Education and the Second Plane of Development

The older child, who seems troublesome being curious over the what, why and wherefore of everything he sees, is building up his mind by his mental activity, and must be given a wide field of culture on which to feed. The task of teaching becomes easy, since we do not need to choose what we shall teach, but should place all before him for the satisfaction of his mental appetite. ("The Six-Year-Old Confronted with the Cosmic Plan," Maria Montessori)

The child from 6-12 years old is physically robust, often untidy and tough, physically daring, strong, and frequently mischievous. They use their imagination to move around in time and space. They have a deep sense of morality and justice and are fiercely loyal to their friends. They are ambitious, industrious and capable of doing an enormous amount of work; they are a steadier worker than the adolescent. They do not spontaneously repeat work. They are moving from the concrete to the abstract and beginning to develop their powers of reasoning. They seek heroes and begin to define their own preferences and passions. They need to feel part of a community and are seeking to define their place in the world. They are hungry to learn about the world, seeking interaction with people outside the family and immediate surroundings. They are adventurers.

The Mornings in City Country School Elementary Classrooms

Students have an uninterrupted three-hour work cycle in their Montessori environments every morning. The Montessori adult sparks the Elementary children's powerful imaginations, and provides them with a vision of the order of things, narrating and impressionistically demonstrating the Great Stories around which the Montessori Elementary curriculum is organized: the Story of the Universe; the Story of Life; the Story of Humanity; the Story of Communication by Signs; and the Story of Communication by Numbers. The stories are retold in increasing detail and complexity every year of the Elementary program. The spiral curriculum--revisiting a subject from different perspectives and in different ways--gives the children an opportunity to go more deeply into a subject while avoiding repetition; only elaboration, amplification and problematization maintain the interest of second-plane children in the same material.

The Elementary Cosmic Education places the emphasis on the big picture and on the interrelation of all things. It moves from the general to the specific; "Interest in special details is never activated without a prior interest in the whole" (Mario Montessori, Jr., 98). The Great Stories provide the whole, the Montessori didactic materials and presentations provide the details, and the project work, Paint, Ceramics, Aikido, Kitchen, Garden, Going-Out and Camping provide the details embedded in whole experiences. What Montessori pedagogy seeks, at every stage, is to ignite the child's imagination and interest enough for the child to become intrinsically motivated to focus deeply and to create understanding.

Learning In Depth

One of the great paradoxes of education is that only when one knows something deeply can one recognize how little one actually knows, that the more one learns the more one realizes how much there is to learn about any topic -(Kieran Egan).

An obsession with helping children understand depth is a distinctive characteristic of City Country School. Learning deeply about something is directly related to developing an autonomous personality: when we are learning about things in a broad sense we depend on the knowledge of others to instruct, to organize the knowledge, to lead us, but when we are learning deeply about something over time, we find our own answers and become our own experts. Learning something in depth helps a person to develop a nose for false information, charlatanism, crazy and superficial claims; it permits one to see and feel the difference between opinion and real knowledge. Deep learning also cultivates a sense of humility as we are

able to appreciate the vastness and complexity of the world, thanks to a deep understanding of one topic. Learning in depth is also essential to finding pleasure in learning; without depth of learning, “the idea of learning for its own sake can never really take hold” (Egan 10).

The astonishing power of deep learning is evident when we work with adolescents who began their Montessori schooling in Children’s House; when they work with higher-level equations, with completing the square and with exponents, they discover the full implications of the bead cabinet, the decanomial and the binomial and trinomial cubes that they used daily throughout their schooling.

In the Elementary program children receive the very special and unusual experience of spending their afternoons working with one material, one process, one topic for an extended period of time (six years). We have chosen Clay, Play, Aikido, Experiments, Making, and Kitchen, as the six areas of concentration.

The Afternoons

There is nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses.

-Aristotle

A classroom, however full it may be of didactic materials and however rigorously prepared the adults who work with the students may be, is a controlled and mediated environment, focused primarily on left-brain learning, on reasoning. In addition to the Montessori-trained adults who dedicate themselves to presenting the Montessori curriculum and to supporting students in their pursuit of understanding, at City Country School we put great emphasis on self-discovery and self-construction through self-expression. In the Elementary program we want children to receive the very special and unusual experience of working with one material, one process, one expert for an extended period of time (six years). We have chosen Clay, Play, Aikido, Experiments, Making, and Kitchen, as the six areas of concentration.

Throughout history and across cultures human beings have used music, movement, language and art to discover and express their inner lives. When children uses these tools they make real to themselves and to others the existence of an inner life: intuitions, thoughts, fears, emotions, beliefs, ideas, dreams, longings, etc. Tools shape us as much as we shape them. A life in which the only tools a child uses are the pen and pencil and the computer tablet, will result in a human being who can only feel and express that which can be expressed with those tools. At City Country School we believe the process of self-discovery and expression through different media is essential to a child’s development. Students at CCS are given the time, the place and the expert support to explore their inner lives and to express them through clay, language, both written and spoken, song, movement, cooking, a wide range of artistic media (papier maché, wire, cardboard, paint, wood, song, storytelling, etc.) in Making, and play. For some children doing chemical experiments, pruning, weeding, planting, making bread, building something, sculpting, or planning outings or gatherings, will be the most satisfying means of expressing their inner selves.

City Country School is a community of practice; everyone is making something and we are genuinely interested in one another’s creations. The students work with true experts who have dedicated much of their lives to their art—be it Aikido, clay, painting, cooking, song—and continue to be students themselves. The children have the enormous luxury of working with these experts for the six years of Elementary (and then in Adolescence): an experience of increasing depth over time.

The same materials used for expression are harnessed for project work and creations of a more academic nature, blurring the lines between passion and scholarship, so to speak. The feedback loop between intellectual work and creative work is useful for children to experience from a young age, so they can understand in their bones that the creative act is the creative act, whether you are inventing a song or a new understanding of the nature of light. Of course, this cannot be taught, it can only be experienced. It would be an achievement to help children really understand three things about creating: it is a process; it requires time (sometimes a lifetime) and deep concentration, and it continues throughout life.

Clay

For a child who is interested in making things, working with clay over many years creates a *patrimonio*: a rich, interior world of know-how. It gives the child lucidity and an appreciation of depth. It creates within him/her a matrix of experience of technical process and creative process. Finally, it creates in the child an understanding of *aura*: of the object as living thing, touched by the hand and emotion. Capturing that signal of authenticity requires depth of experience. Drinking from a perfect, industrially made cup on a perfect, industrially made table, one becomes unaware of the body and of the space around one, the objects disappear into one seamless. Drinking from a slightly lopsided or quirky cup, on that same industrial table, one becomes aware of the space around one: of the table, of the cup, of one's hands on the imperfect surface of the cup. This gift is possible only if one has cultivated a sensibility. Young children seem to have this sensibility, but they lose it as it is replaced by other values. At City Country School we strive to help the child retain and refine this natural sensibility. Students have long, uninterrupted, studio time in which to explore the material and express themselves through it. No commentary is offered on their work, only technical assistance.

Play

In the first few years of the school, we noticed that many children had difficulty playing. We observed that they were accustomed to being entertained and having their play organized for them. They continually sought the approval of adults and were dependent on spectators without whom they felt invisible and unable to sustain play. They were accustomed to the continuous feedback and reward systems of electronic games. They had great difficulty tapping into deep inner impulses or their own innate aptitudes.

In an attempt to help the children develop their play and to wean them from their dependence on the feedback and approval of others, we hired experts trained in the work of Arno Stern to assist the Play afternoons, helping students express and discover themselves through play. Our experts usually take the children to the Dehesa de la Villa, the big park that is a five-minute walk from school.

Aikido

Aikido, which means the way of harmonizing with the spirit of the universe, is studied for five years in Elementary, beginning in the second year, and continues into Adolescence. It is a young, fast-growing and revolutionary major martial art. The philosopher and practitioner George Leonard describes it well:

With ancient samurai roots it is a radical reform of the samurai tradition, seeking not victory over others, but rather, in the founder's words, the loving protection of all beings. Its techniques can cause severe damage or even death, but its heartfelt aim is peace and harmony. Truly mystical, at times seemingly paranormal, it is also eminently practical, with nearly endless application for home, school and office—for every aspect of our physical, emotional, social, and spiritual life (The Way of Aikido).

Aikido requires deep, focused breathing and concentration accompanied by complex, coordinated movement. Aikido is a meditation in movement. All Aikido classes begin with a short sitting meditation. Elementary students study aikido during school hours and are expected to take at least one Aikido extra-curricular class per week beginning in their second year of Elementary. All Adolescent students have two ninety-minute Aikido classes per week and are expected to attend evening adult classes when they have reached the necessary skill level.

Kitchen Classroom (Suspended until the pandemic ends)

*The baker's blessing: may your crust be
crisp and your bread always rise.*

- Peter Rheinhardt

The Kitchen Classroom is a space of making and thinking at the heart of the school (as kitchens are the heart of a home). It is a classroom in which the children can experience first-hand exactly why the story of humanity is the story of the preparation and sharing of food. Food is a nexus of human experience, a place where body, culture and spirit meet, a crossroads of the senses, of the inner and the outer, the base and the elevated, the fresh and the rotted.

Bread making and the history of humanity are inextricably linked. To understand bread making you must study agriculture, technology, geography, chemistry, manners, economy, trade, and more. Making bread and sharing bread touches deep in the human psyche. The work of preparing, kneading, baking and sharing bread unites the mind, the hand and the heart; it mediates between our inner lives and the world.

Children at City Country make bread. They use a sourdough captured from the air fifteen years ago to leaven their miche for the school lunch. From beginning to end the bread making is a two-day process, internalized during their years at school. Bread making will become a part of what they know in their bones and can make for themselves and their families whenever they wish to for the rest of their lives. Beyond the comforting practicality of this knowledge, children will understand other things in a deep way: fermentation, gelatinization, caramelization, transformation, coagulation, the life-cycle, the importance of time as an ingredient in natural processes, the nature of sugars, starches, enzymes, bacteria, and many other things. An activity like bread making, revisited over the course of nine years at school and examined from all angles will be understood on the literal, metaphoric, ethical and mystical levels. The fact that such a simple process with only three ingredients can have so many levels and speak to so many subjects, helps children see the interrelation of all things, as well as the relationship between depth and breadth.

The children make bread and eat the bread, but it is not always the same. The children begin to notice subtle differences in flavor, which they can begin to relate to differences in preparation, season, flour batch, type of salt, room temperature, etc. In the Kitchen the children refine their senses by actively smelling, touching, tasting and comparing not just the bread dough and the batters they make, but also the fruits, vegetables, grains, cheeses and seasonings that are used in the kitchen. And each one of those things comes from a place, was grown by someone, transported somehow to our kitchen.

While the Elementary children take full responsibility for the preparation of the daily sourdough loaf of bread for the school lunch, they examine questions about bread making from many perspectives. What does it mean to make bread? Who made bread in the past? How was it invented? Was it invented or discovered? What is the difference? (So, was math invented or discovered?) Why are the bacteria in sourdough only found in sourdough? How is that possible? What does it mean that bread is solid beer and beer is liquid bread? Do all cultures make bread? Beer? Where does wheat come from? Where does flour come from? When did bread making begin? Why is there salt in the bread? Where's the salt from?

The kitchen classroom is a space in which to work on complex questions in a clear and sensorial way. Sharing food is at the heart of division. Making food for many people is at the heart of multiplication. In a kitchen you measure, weigh, estimate, observe, experiment, share, smell, feel, taste, experience.

The Big Work: Project-Based Learning

Here is an essential principle of education: to teach details is to bring confusion; to establish the relationship between things is to bring knowledge.

-Maria Montessori, "Childhood to Adolescence"

The emphasis on project-work as the children move into and through Elementary is simply to take Maria Montessori at her word. She describes the elementary child as intensely social, seeking to work collaboratively with their peers. She emphasizes the need for Elementary education to take the child out of the classroom and challenge them: "The closed school... can no longer be sufficient for him... While the younger child seeks comforts, the older child is now eager to encounter challenges."

Project work at City Country School is not just another way to provide content to students, as it is with most project-based learning. The Montessori adult is not seeking to transmit anything predetermined, or to assign anything. The project is an extended work that arises from a student or group's need to answer a fertile question that they themselves have found interesting. The effort to answer extended, deep questions requires students to apply classroom learning in other contexts and to bring the outside world into the classroom. Projects create the need to seek out essential content and to develop particular skills such as research, problem-solving, inquiry, critical thinking, effective communication, teamwork, collaboration, motivation and grit. Projects require purposeful action in the real world, structured around relevant, authentic questions or problems, producing real experiences and genuine artefacts.

At City Country, there are two additional types of projects: the project that is always present in the environment (for example, the kitchen garden, bread making), and the project that is a cultural tradition in the school (for example, the Christmas party, the Cat Café, camping, hiking a GR trail). These projects are compelling for the students and bring out enormous will to work. We have observed students working unflaggingly for many hours a day shaping Christmas cookies, picking figs, cooking batch after batch of fondant for their shop, hiking for days on end to complete a long trail.

The Table

Elementary children like to eat outdoors whenever possible, which is most days, because the garden is walled and the sun warms the patio even in winter. The children are responsible for setting and clearing the tables. They sit in small groups at round tables. The ability to sit comfortably at the table, knowing what to do, without self-consciousness, is one of the things Elementary children learn. They learn to eat with grace and they learn that the other people with whom they sit down to eat, deserve a conversation. In the absence of courtesy it is not possible to have a true conversation in which people feel safe to reveal their thoughts and share themselves. The table is a democratizing space, where the children can learn the rules of democratic conversation. We compare conversation to playing ball; if you want the game to be fun you should not hold onto the ball for long periods, because others will get bored, you should not throw the ball to someone with excessive force, you should always be ready to catch the ball, to move a little in order to reach the ball, you must be careful not to drop the ball, not to lose the ball, not to start playing a different game all of a sudden, you should not change the rules without consensus, you should be encouraging to others, you should wait for the ball to come to you, you should not shove someone else aside to get the ball.

Learning to converse with ease and pleasure, will help our children live happier, richer lives, and will make it possible to live democratically.

Poem Before Lunch

We are glad
for the sun that
warmed the Earth
and the rain that fell and
watered the wheat
for the salt that came from
the oceans deep and
for the friends who made
this bread to eat.
Thank you!

Marcia Mansergh

Games Week

The week after Christmas vacation is set aside for a school-wide role-playing game which everyone – children and teachers, Elementary and Adolescence—plays.

City Country School Adolescence (12-16)

The Why of City Country School Adolescence: The Work of Individuation

In September, 2022, we begin our sixth year of the Adolescent Program, addressing the specific, and too often ignored, developmental and cognitive needs of the adolescent. The work of the adolescent is individuation. The adolescent tests everything against his or her own sense of truth, asking the question, “is this me, or is this not me?” What feels true is kept, what rings hollow is discarded. This is how the adolescent can know the world. Individuation is arduous work that involves the intellect, the emotions and the spirit.

Early and mid-adolescence (from twelve to sixteen) is often a very stressful time of life. Schools and our contemporary culture undervalue the adolescent’s work, asking them to remain physically still for many hours a day, doing work that means little to them, isolated with their peers, away from genuine interaction with the adults who can provide the examples that they seek. In our society the generous, energetic adolescent, desirous to understand society and contribute to it, is often provided for materially and physically (lots of clothes, music, technology, entertainment, prepared food, pocket money), but is not provided with the essential ingredients for healthy self-creation: membership in a conscious community of peers, adult respect, support and guidance, and meaningful work with the opportunity to give back to society. The adolescent’s spiritual need for meaning and transcendence is ignored. This results in feelings of uselessness, disconnection and dependence.

At CCSA we recognize and celebrate adolescence as a time of self-creation: as a time of intense change equal only to the changes of the child from birth to three years. Like newborns, adolescents must be cared for with thoughtfulness and respect, and their transformation, spurred by far-reaching changes in the brain itself, must be understood as an awesome process of rebirth. “When navigated well, these brain changes can lead to positive outcomes later on. Holding on to the essential power of the teenage mind into later adolescence and beyond, into the adult years, can enable us to continue lifelong learning and recognize the important life-affirming sense of adventure, vitality and courage that adolescence brings” (Siegel, *The Power of the Adolescent Brain*).

The transition to adulthood is not an easy one, especially in a culture that offers superficial and confusing ideas of what it is to succeed and what it is to lead a good life. Our work as educators is to provide an inviting and warm environment suited to the adolescent. An environment that can help adolescents open up to themselves, to one another and to the adults who are trained to accompany them in their work. Through interesting, challenging, and authentic academic work, real conversations that allow space for the transcendent, excellent materials, opportunities for creative expression, meaningful work and adult support, the adolescent can create a genuine, resilient, conscious, self-confident self.

The How of City Country School Adolescence: The Prepared Environment, Prepared Adults, Community Life, Meaningful Work

For Maria Montessori the key element of the Adolescent program was the sharing in community life. Contemporary research in developmental psychology supports Montessori’s observation that adolescence is a tribal stage of life. One of the founders of the Montessori Hershey Farm School in Ohio, after working with adolescents for sixteen years, writes:

The momentum that drives the adolescent and the sensitivity that informs her is the need to understand how social structure works—what values hold it together, what it means to contribute to it, how one navigates relationships within it, and how one finds meaning in it (Ewert-Krocker).

Students create community on trips during which they harvest, hike, camp, work in non-profits and explore Madrid together. Their overnight multi-day trips allow students to create a real community of collaboration and support that comes alive in the classroom.

Adolescents learn in groups, in the company of adults, being valued, being seen and heard, having judgment withheld, with tenderness. CCSA provides adolescents with the company of adults who permit them to explore, to find their own way as individuals and as a group. Lisa Miller, psychologist and founder of the Spirituality Mind Body Institute at Columbia University, describes the adolescent quest in this way:

A strong identity emerges as they come to know and accept themselves in all ways: gender, sexuality, personality, tastes, appetites and interests. All of these “selves” need support. Teens want to love and be loved; they want to connect. And now, the science of spirituality and psychology tell us that they want to transcend. In order for all that to happen they need to accept themselves and feel accepted (The Spiritual Child).

To support the “selves” that the adolescents are continually experimenting with, CCSA provides ample opportunity for self-expression. All classes--from Mathematics to Ceramics-- emphasize freedom of expression, dialogue and self-discovery.

In the CCSA classroom, in the country campus, on excursions, on camping and other excursions, adolescents find safe, harmonious, culturally rich environments in which to collaborate with each other and with adults who are prepared to receive the adolescent with open hearts and with understanding. The kinds of environments created stand in stark contrast to the impoverished spaces adolescents will create when unsupported (in the street, in *botellónes*, and online).

The *What* of City Country School Adolescence: Content

CCSA meets the needs of the adolescent with a varied, challenging, interesting and supported plan of work and study: Creative Expression Workshop; Mathematics and Geometry; English Language and Literature; Know Thyself; Spanish Language and Literature; Spanish Culture; Kitchen Classroom; the Farm; Aikido; Science; Overnight Trips and Residencies; Camping; Microeconomy; Making Workshop;.

The Farm

City Country School provides the adolescents with a positive response to the present climate challenge and the feelings of helplessness it provokes in the shape of an off-grid restorative agriculture project in the *sierra de Madrid*, about 50 minutes from the school, for which we will build classrooms, workshops, a kitchen and a greenhouse. Developing the Farm is one of the big, continuous projects around which the Adolescent Program is organized. Right now it is in its early stages and is a place where we can go to study the existing ecosystem: the soil, the geography, the botany and the insects and animals that live there. We will study the watershed in preparation for creating water-retention systems to improve the soil. We will study solar and wind-power, since the site is completely off grid. We will collaborate with professionals already doing restorative agriculture on the site, including rotational pasturing of chickens and horses. Students will have an opportunity to work with animals, construct, plant, set up off-grid power systems, collect seed, study soil, compost, and closed land-use systems.

Mathematics

The mathematical mind of the child has been a focus of work in the Montessori environments since Children’s House. This work continues, both abstractly and with concrete materials, throughout the adolescent years. When done in a developmentally appropriate way, the study of Mathematics cultivates logical thinking, an ordered mind, problem solving skills, confidence and fearless learning, all of which support moral development and communication. Mathematical thought is the foundation of scientific and legal reasoning; it is a way to understand the world and a way to communicate with others. As such, it receives dedicated time for instruction and practice.

Language Arts

Language is the other great shaper of the human intelligence, beginning at birth (probably before!). For the adolescent, language is a means of self-expression and self-discovery, it is the means of communication in the social context, and it is a principal means by which the adolescent will acquire the cultural knowledge necessary for adult life. Language is a part of everything we do and everything that is studied in the Adolescent Program.

The linguistic mind continues to develop and remains very elastic for the acquisition of new languages during adolescence. The lead teachers of the Adolescent Program are two native English speakers and two native Spanish speaker. Mathematics, Science, Know Thyself, Quest, Kitchen, and Making Workshop are in English; Clay, Creative Expression, Spanish Language, Spanish Culture and Aikido are in Spanish.

In English Language Arts we read one Shakespeare play each year, one short novel and a collection of poetry, which we discuss and analyze in class. We write (draft, revise, edit, publish) weekly assignments, both critical and personal. In Spanish class we study Spanish grammar and writing, leading students through the requirements of the Spanish national curriculum. We study Spanish Culture and Literature following parts of the Spanish national curriculum, through texts, cultural artifacts, private collections, geographical study and interviews with Spanish experts in various fields.

Science

In Biology, Physics and Chemistry we study our environment and our relationship to it by means of direct observation and experimentation, the application of the scientific method and direct interaction. One example of a Biology project was our study of fig trees. Fig trees, within a complex ecosystem, offer us fruit at certain times of the year in an appropriate climate. We studied the peculiar pollination of the fig tree and the history of its cultivation. We harvested the fruit over several days while living in tents amongst the trees. We transported the fruit to Madrid where we transformed it into sweets and jams. We explored how these food products are transformed by our digestive system into cellular food that is transported along with oxygen to all cells in the human body, where it, in turn, is transformed into a type of energy that we use to power the muscular, skeletal, circulatory and other systems of our body.

Aikido

Aikido is an essential part of the CCSA Adolescent experience. Students have two class a week during school hours. Many students at CCSA have been studying Aikido for six years by the time they reach the Adolescent Program and have attained a high level of competency, requiring them to attend adult classes, as well. Aikido provides the adolescents with a lived experience of their own body energy. They learn to locate their energy center, to use it as the source of strength and balance, both mental and physical. They learn to observe with absolute focus and to capture their opponent's intention and direction. They learn to sit and gather themselves, to act decisively, responding to the moment.

Self-Expression

Self-Expression through music, language, art and movement is a distinctive need in adolescent development. Montessori wrote: "The chief symptom of the adolescent is a state of expectation, a tendency toward creative work and a need for strengthening of self-confidence." In the work of self-expression, awkward and vulnerable adolescents can try out different voices and roles and refine their movements. Since adolescents are creating their societal selves, they need the opportunity to express themselves through art, dance, music, movement, dialogue, debate, writing, acting, cooking. Self-expression provides means for them to reflect on their world and themselves and to respond to it in ways that are not strictly academic. The act of expression links them to their own emotions and minds, and, at the same time, links them to their peers and to the world. Professionals of music, theater and art support this essential expressive work of the adolescent, who can teach techniques and forms, coach performances, provide guidance, and be facilitators to the creative work of the adolescent.

MAKING

MAKING is a project-based workshop that uses art, storytelling, music, and performance to expose students to making using multiple media. Students are introduced and familiarized with these media through hands-on demonstrations of their 2D, 3D, and sonic uses, as well as through presentations of historical and contemporary examples. Students work to discover what truly inspires them so that they may develop their own genuine creative language. MAKING includes field trips to museums and performance spaces to inspire the students and expose them to finished projects. A presentation of the projects and a class discussion mark the end of each project.

Know Thyself

The essential work of understanding ourselves and others, and of working and living in community, is supported by the directors of the Adolescent program in daily meetings, long projects, outings, as well as in direct instruction in tools of self-discovery and self-mastery, including habit formation, how to work with the energies of emotion, how to listen actively, how to listen for the transcendent, and how to respect oneself and others. Know Thyself is a continuous space in which adults give weight to what the adolescent feels is most important: questions of identity, truth, meaning, good and evil.

Kitchen

We like to feel competent to take of ourselves and others without reliance on processed or prepared foods of any type. We love the warmth and companionability of the kitchen, collaborating to make something that we can enjoy together and share with others. Without realizing it we practice laboratory techniques: setting up a precise and complete mise-en-place, recording our methods and results. We hone our naturalist intelligence with close observation of small changes in textures, sounds, smells. We practice patience and resilience, because in Kitchen things do not always turn out as planned! We do not rely on outside evaluation of any type; we can see and taste for ourselves when we have done good work. We learn the role of food in ritual and in celebrations and we practice creating special occasions and bringing people together through food. The Kitchen is a locus of history, anthropology, culture, science and language.

Clay

Clay is an ancient medium, requiring the entire hand, even the entire torso, sometimes the entire body to transform it into a piece. It is an absolutely basic material, that is, at the same time, endlessly nuanced and complex, revealing itself slowly with continued experimentation and retaining many mysteries, even to its masters. Clay requires patience, persistence, technical know-how, practice and respect, while being accessible even to the absolute beginner. Clay is a prehistoric medium, that connects the young to the Earth, to their past and to themselves.

Trips

The Farm, the camping, the overnight stays to harvest fruits, the days-long long walks, the collaborations with non-profit projects, all provide the adolescent with the meaning and community living that they crave and need. Because they are in the stage of life during which they are creating their social selves, learning to understand one another and learning to express themselves, uninterrupted time for face-to-face conversations and authentic human connection are essential. (In an effort to foment real human interaction, the use of cell phones and personal computers during school time is not permitted at CCSA.)

Microeconomy

Producing things of value for the community of the school, and for the wider community outside of the school, connects the adolescent to the world in an adult way. This relationship of economic exchange, Montessori argues, is the basic building block of society and an essential experience in the adolescent's apprenticeship to adulthood:

The essential reform is this: to put the adolescent on the road to economic independence. We might call it “a school of experience in the elements of social life...”

The Adolescent microeconomy is an essential part of the adolescent experience and is based on their strong developmental needs to understand production and exchange, to earn money, to make things with their hands, to contribute to the group. The money they earn for their creations will be used to finance their projects and to grow their micro-economy.

Quest

In their third year of the Adolescent Program, students are expected to design a year-long project and complete it. Each student works with several adult mentors to design and execute their project, which is meant to be a journey into something they are especially interested in that stretches them, challenges them and changes them. The project is interdisciplinary and must make use of both head and hand.

The Fourth Year

In their fourth year at CCSA, students prepare to transition to other educational systems, including the Spanish *Bachillerato*, the American 11th grade, and the International Baccalaureate. In preparation for entering a *Bachillerato*, and to earn the equivalent of the cuarto de la ESO, students receive intensive Spanish Language and Culture classes, with grades and exams. Students also receive more Science and Math instruction in Spanish. They spend fewer days than the other students working on the Farm, though they still go weekly during good weather.

Important questions for adolescents:	Possible answers when there is an authentic, strong spiritual core:	Possible answers when there is <u>not</u> an authentic, strong spiritual core:
Who am I?	A human being with innate dignity	A person with certain qualities, talents and abilities
Where does my identity come from?	From my humanity, my intentions, my conscience	From my successes and failures
What is relationship?	Something sacred, mutual respect and affection, reciprocated love, a source of growth and connection	Something to meet my needs, to receive pleasure and love, to widen my social network
What is my life path?	A path that I create myself in collaboration with life as it unfolds, a path full of opportunities, where the risks and dangers are manageable	A predetermined path laid out for me by my education/religion/society that I then follow
Do I have a place in the world?	I am always connected. I feel part of something greater.	I feel alone.
What is the meaning of life?	For me life has a deep and important meaning, even if I don't know exactly what that is.	Life is random, without meaning.
What is reality?	Something bigger and motivating. Something with which I am comfortable.	Something unknowable, empty, threatening.
What do I think when something good happens?	I feel grateful, blessed.	I feel I am entitled to it, that I deserve it, that I am lucky.
What do I think when something bad happens to me?	Everything that happens to me has some meaning for me and can be an opportunity, even if I am unable to see it at first.	I feel it is random, a failure, without meaning.
What is a good life?	A life in which I can contribute to society and to others and live in harmony with myself.	A life of success: good job, nice house, attractive partner, fame.
What is success?	Understanding myself and those around me, using my talents, contributing, learning, growing.	Popularity, fame, money, power.
Why study?	To grow as a person, because I love to learn, because I love to use what I know to contribute to society.	To pass my exams, to get good grades, to have a good job someday.
What is the purpose of work?	To continue to grow, to continue to learn, to contribute to society, to take care of those I love.	To have money to buy things, to get prestige, recognition, and security.

SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Important Note: City Country School reserves the right to make an exception to any policy/procedure/rule if it is deemed necessary to preserve the spirit of the school's mission.

Admissions Policy

Parents seeking admission for their child are asked to take the following steps:

1. Attend an Open House. If it is not possible to attend an Open House, parents can schedule a tour to visit the school.
2. Read the City Country School Handbook.
3. After reading the Handbook, submit an application of admission.
4. Schedule an interview. This last interview is for one of the Directors to meet the child and the parents together.
5. City Country School has a rolling admissions policy. Parents will be notified within one month as to whether their child is admitted, not admitted or placed on the waiting list.
6. Parents have two weeks from the date of admissions to hand in all the completed forms, sign the contract and pay the non-refundable enrollment fee.

City Country School is an inclusive school. We seek and value a diverse and inclusive school community. At the same time, we must recognize our limitations in meeting highly complex or specialized learning needs. Students whose behavior and/or specialized physical or learning needs do not permit him or her to use the prepared environment of the school with freedom, and/or to participate in Going-Out, cannot be admitted. Students with special needs whom we hope will be able to participate and flourish in our program will be admitted on a provisional basis. There will be a re-evaluation meeting after the first few months with a mental health professional, parents, teachers and administrators to determine whether City Country School can meet the child's needs while maintaining its mission and method.

Application for Admissions

Before inviting a family to form part of City Country School, we must evaluate closely whether the child and the family will be a good fit for the school. Montessori education is different in fundamental ways from the traditional Spanish, American or British school systems and we must be sure that parents fully understand and support those differences. We must determine whether the child will be happy and thrive in the Montessori classroom.

To this end there are several criteria we take into consideration with each applicant.

For children applying for admission to the Children's House, we look for the following criteria to be met:

- The child no longer uses diapers and is independent in toileting.
- The child shows respect for other children.
- The child shows respect for authority.
- The child can follow school customs and guidelines.
- The child shows eagerness to learn.
- The child is developmentally able to perform the functions in his/her prepared environment.

For children applying for admission to the Elementary program:

- The child is able to function in a social group.
- The child is desirous to be part of the Elementary community.
- The child demonstrates an eagerness to learn.
- The child respects other children.
- The child respects adults.
- The child is able to work both independently and collaboratively.
- The child is able to understand and follow the school's norms, customs and guidelines.
- The child has the academic skills necessary to do the academic work of the Elementary classroom.

For students seeking admission to the Adolescent Program:

- The adolescent wishes to form part of the Adolescent Program.
- The adolescent has a strong desire to learn.

- The adolescent is sufficiently prepared, intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally, to participate fully in the Adolescent Program.
- The adolescent accepts the responsibility for his/her own learning.
- The adolescent is interested in the work and the community life of the Adolescent Program.
- The adolescent shows respect for him/herself and for those around him/her.

Criteria for families wishing to enroll their child:

- Parents must thoroughly understand the mission and pedagogy of City Country School and be willing to attend Parent Education during their child's time at the school.
- Parents must desire to make a long-term (at least three-year cycle) commitment to a Montessori education.
- Parents must understand the importance of the school-parent partnership, and support and participate in said partnership.

Obligations of City Country School

1. To implement an equitable admissions policy. Children/families are admitted without regard to race, religion, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin.
2. To exercise a fair hiring policy, without regard to gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin.
3. To actively create and support a diverse school community.
4. To provide parents and students with accurate and complete information about the student's progress and well-being, as well as about all school policies, procedures and events.
5. To provide fair and accurate evaluations of each student.
6. To maintain complete, accurate and confidential financial records for each family.
7. To provide complete, timely and accurate information on the full costs of its program, making reasonable tuition increases reflecting real rises in costs, and providing timely notice of any changes.
8. To guarantee the confidentiality of all student records.
9. To respect the privacy and confidentiality of all meetings/conversations with families and students.
10. To meet with any parent or student when necessary.
11. To be role models for all the children: to speak politely at all times to everyone (children, other parents, staff, etc.) and to demonstrate to the children a respect for all cultures, religions, races, sexual orientations, nationalities, family customs, etc.
12. To reflect faithfully the learning environment, methodology and commitments set forth in the City Country School Handbook.
13. To provide quality instruction by experienced and credentialed professionals.
14. To uphold the values of a Montessori education: respecting the individual, nurturing the human spirit, supporting academic excellence.

Obligations of the Parents of City Country School:

1. To provide full and accurate information about their child to the school on all school forms and applications and during meetings with teachers and administrators.
2. To communicate important news/changes in the family that might affect their child's emotional state.
3. To communicate the presence of any infectious or potentially infectious illness, or of head lice, to the school as soon as they become aware of it, and to ensure that their child does not come to school in an infectious state.
4. To pay school bills in full and on time, and to meet school deadlines, for example, the re-enrollment deadline.
5. To provide their child with the equipment (Aikido uniform, sun hat, water boots, etc.) s/he needs for school.
6. To ensure that their child is rested and well enough to attend to lessons and to participate actively in the full school day. Parents must be prepared to pick up a child who is too tired to participate fully in school.
7. To speak with the school directly when problems/doubts arise. To support the essential relationship of trust between child and teacher by speaking first to the school should a worry or doubt arise.
8. To communicate any doubts or worries directly to the teachers or administrators.
9. To attend Parent Education evenings.
10. To attend school events whenever possible.
11. To read the City Country School Handbook and request clarification on any point not understood.
12. To bring their child to school on time and to pick their child up on time from all activities, including extra-curriculars and Aftercare, and to respect the times established by the school for school events, including meetings and parties.
13. To respect the internal communications of the school.
14. Publication in print or online of all or any documents, or sections of documents, internal to the school (including this Handbook) is not permitted.
15. To reimburse the school for the cost of infractions of their child, such as breaking equipment, damaging didactic materials or damaging the facilities.
16. To be role models for all the children: to speak politely at all times to everyone (children, other parents, staff, etc.) and to demonstrate to the children a respect for all cultures, religions, races, sexual orientations, nationalities, family customs, etc.
17. To conduct themselves in the school and at all school events outside the school in a way that upholds the values of the a Montessori education and of City Country School: respecting the individual, nurturing the human spirit, supporting academic excellence.

Problem Solving

City Country School maintains an open-door policy for problem solving. If you find a problem, please call or email the school. The appropriate person will address the problem with you. If a satisfactory solution is not found, please contact a Director, or the Head of school, Sarah Cardelús, directly by email or by calling the school.

In our approach to problem solving with the children, we follow the following steps:

- Stop! Notice that you are in a conflict.
- Protect. Protect yourself and the other person by calming down, walking away, asking for help.
- Express and Listen. Express how you feel and listen to the other person.
- Propose. Suggest solutions.
- Agree. Find something you can agree on, this can include the agreement that you are stuck and that you need more time, or more help.
- Revisit. If necessary or interesting, have a calm conversation about the incident hours or days later and see if there is anything to learn from it.

Disciplinary Policy

For City Country School to function, students must cooperate. We have no means by which to coerce children into becoming part of the school culture. We depend on the goodwill of the students for the smooth running of the school. Without each child's cooperation and desire to create a peaceful

community there can be no authentic learning community, no freedom, no choice. A child who has proven s/he cannot observe and respect the norms and customs of City Country School will be asked to leave.

This is a partial list of infractions:

- Disturbing the peace of the classroom.
- Disturbing the peace of any school space.
- Refusal to become part of the community of learners.
- Refusal to participate in Community Work, or other school obligations.
- Interrupting and/or damaging the work of another child.
- Willful disregard for the norms, values and customs of the school community.
- Damaging school property or the property of other students, teachers, or any one in the school community.
- Bullying of other children, verbally or physically.
- Hitting another child with intent to hurt.

Parent Education

We send our children to school to learn, but they are not the only ones who learn; we parents transform utterly in the years of our children's schooling. We are slowly transformed by the whole practice of Montessori pedagogy, which, with time, becomes clearer and more relevant to our parenting. We begin to understand the why of the Montessori approach and we can apply the underlying principles to other areas of our lives. To nourish our hunger for understanding why our children's environments and days are organized the way they are, we offer Montessori Parent Education in the different environments. In these sessions, you will learn about all the different areas and presentations of the curriculum. You will learn about why knowledge is introduced in a particular order and in the different ways in which it is presented over time. The Montessori guides will answer your questions and help you get to know your child's classroom.

Parents become part of a school community that will sustain our learning and growth as parents over many years. There is great potential for our own growth and development as we parent our child through experiences which can activate our own childhood memories and experiences, whether remembered or not. Our Adult Development Evenings offer parents the opportunity to work on emotions that arise from those memories and experiences. When it is time to leave your child at school for the first time, you relive your own first separation from your mother after birth, the first time you were left at school or daycare, and so on. If you can be present with your own emotions and your own process you can spare your child the drama of working things out through them; for example, by encouraging your child to stay in school while at the same time holding on tight! When your child is excluded from play by another child, you relive your experiences of exclusion. We can learn to become aware of these moments and to work them out; our children offer us this possibility, if we can take it.

PART FOUR: PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Communication

Please call the school's main number if you need to communicate with the school during the school day. The school telephone number is 91-373-8695. You can also contact the school by email. Please call the school if your communication has any urgency, an email is not as efficient. All emails can be sent to info@citycountryschool.org

Lateness/Absence

If your child is absent, late, or will be picked up early, please communicate this information directly 91-373-8695. A log of lateness and absences is kept by the classroom teachers. Please see the Disciplinary Policies for details about excessive absences and tardiness.

Meetings

Please schedule a meeting if what you wish to communicate to a teacher takes more than one minute. Teachers cannot hold meetings with parents at drop-off or pickup. Please request a meeting by calling and talking to the school secretary, or directly at drop-off or pick-up. Teachers should not be called on their private cell phones, nor are instant messaging or whatsapp appropriate means of communicating with school faculty in anything but an emergency.

There will be a pre-conference with all new families before the beginning of school or in the first few weeks of school. This is an occasion for parents to tell us anything they think we should know before the beginning of the year. Elementary will have two conferences during the year. These conferences are to talk about all the great work that your child is doing, not to inform parents of problems. If we see any problems, we will be quick to schedule a meeting with parents, so that we will not waste precious time. We ask that parents do the same: if you have any concerns or worries please do not put off calling us and asking for an appointment. If you see any worrisome change in your child, or if you feel unease with anything that your child tells you about school, please let us know as quickly as possible.

The school cares deeply about each child's privacy. Teachers cannot have serious conversations about any child's problems at pick-up or drop-off. If you must speak to a teacher at that time, please ask to speak in the office for a moment.

Please be aware of all the little ears around you when talking about other children or parents in the school. Elementary children are especially efficient at spreading the word!

Protocol for Meetings

Please call Claudia to schedule a meeting. In that conversation you can decide what kind of meeting you need; there are three types of meetings.

Touch-Base Meeting: to talk about something minor or to ask a question. These meetings last no more than 15 minutes and take place during the school day. One teacher is present.

Conference: to talk more in depth about a student. These meetings last 30 minutes, take place during the school day, whenever possible, and are attended by one or two teachers.

Long Meeting: to talk about complex situations. These meetings have no time limit, take place outside of regular school hours and require the attendance of the child's teacher, and the Head of School, the Director of the Adolescent Program, the Director of Elementary or the Director of Children's House, as well as any other professional whose advice is considered helpful to the discussion.

Open Meetings with the Head of School

Several times a year there will be an informal meeting with Sarah Cardelús that is open to all parents. This meeting has no set agenda. Parents are invited to ask questions and make comments in a group setting where fruitful and informative conversation can happen. These meetings are marked on the school calendar; an email announcement will be sent out the week before the meeting. Attendance is entirely optional.

Emergency Contact Cards

All parents should fill out two Emergency Contact cards: one will be kept in the Front Office in Elementary and one will be kept in the Office in Children's House. Please be sure to update the information should there be a change in your phone number, email address or home address, or in the telephone numbers of other emergency contacts like grandparents. The Emergency Card also includes the names of the people who are authorized to pick up your child. Only people authorized on the Emergency Contact

Card will be allowed to pick up your child. If you must send someone who is not an authorized person to pick up your child, you must call the school before pick-up and speak with a member of the staff, leaving the full name of the person picking up the child. If we do not know the person who is picking up your child, the person will be asked to show identification.

In the case of divorce, we ask that a copy of the visitation agreement be left on file in the school office, so that the school knows on what days the child will be picked up by which parent.

Sickness

Please take care of all the children in the school, as well as the teachers and staff, by not sending a sick child to school. If your child has any of the following symptoms please keep him/her home: an undiagnosed rash, fever, diarrhea, vomiting, cough, runny nose, lice, conjunctivitis, or is simply unable to participate in the full day of school. When your child is sick, please notify the school, so that your child's teacher can be informed.

If your child has an infectious disease or lice, please notify the school as soon as possible, so that we can notify other parents.

If your child takes a prescription medicine that needs to be administered by the school, please request a meeting before the first day of school, to explain fully when and how much medicine to administer and to sign a release form. The medicine must be in its original packaging, clearly labeled and with the child's name and the frequency and dosage written on the bottle. Never send your child to school with his/her medicine. Children are not permitted to administer their own medicine during school hours.

If your child has any allergies please notify the school before the first day.

If your child becomes ill at school we will call his/her parents. If we cannot reach a parent we will call another person on the Emergency contact card. Your child will be made comfortable in the office while s/he waits to be picked up.

Injuries

In the case of minor injury, the school will comfort your child and use simple remedies to treat the injury: ice, soap and water and band-aids. A teacher will take note of the injury in the Injury Notebook and write a simple report to give to the person picking the child up from school. If your child has any unexplained injury, please let us know as soon as possible.

In the case of serious injury, the school will call an ambulance and then call the child's parents.

Parent Classroom Observations

One parent from each family is invited to observe in their child's classroom each year. Notice of Observation Periods will be sent to parents. There will be a sign-up sheet in the front office.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up

Both pick-up and drop-off are challenging times in schools and require that parents and caregivers be especially careful and vigilant. We ask that parents be vigilant of all the children at that time, not only of their own child(ren).

Parking is not easy to find very close to the school. Please give yourself time for drop-off.

It is important to arrive at school on time in the mornings, because it is stressful for children to arrive once things have started and everyone has greeted one another. Some children need extra time in the morning to adjust to the change between school and home. School opens at 8:30, but does not begin until 9:00, allowing a thirty-minute window to arrive on time to school, as well as sufficient time for children to make the transition to school.

The school gate closes at 9. We do open the front door until 9:30 for those arriving late. If you are late, you must wait! 9:30 is not an alternate drop-off time.

If your child will be later than 9:30, please call Claudia and let her know. If you need to pick your child up early for an appointment, please let Claudia know, so that she can make sure the child is ready to go when you arrive to pick him/her up.

Pick-up at the Children's House is from 3:50-4:00. This is to ensure that parents who have children in both buildings can then pick up at Elementary by 4:00.

Please do not enter the patio or the school at pick-up, unless you have a meeting with a teacher.

Pick-up at Elementary is at 4:00. It is by the side gate, unless it is raining, in which case pick-up is at the front door.

Children's Clothes and Responsibilities

Please be sure to label all your child's clothing. Teachers spend too much time playing the game "Whose Is This?" All clothes that are not labeled will be placed directly in the Lost and Found. Children can search the Lost and Found whenever they wish to, parents may search through the Lost and Found on Friday mornings from 8:30-8:50 and Friday at pick-up.

Since parents and teachers are working to foster self-reliance in the children, we ask that parents not come into the school at the end of the day to look for sweaters and bags and other forgotten items. If a child forgets something, then s/he must look for it the next day. Children should make an effort to remember what they brought to school. The habits that they begin to develop in the daily practice of remembering their things, are a necessary base for their organizational abilities and habits as adolescents.

Snacks

The history, culture and preparation of food are an important part of the curriculum and culture of City Country School. Part of our aim is to show children what real food is and to provide them with an oasis of authenticity in which the only foods they see or eat are unprocessed and authentic. Lunches are low on the food chain (vegetarian), organic as much as possible (special occasion foods like the birthday cakes and some party food are not organic), and homemade the day they are served. The foods we prepare are simple (lentils and other pulses, grains, vegetables, sourdough bread, eggs) and repetitive, because young children do not appreciate a lot of variety at lunchtime; there are so many new things at school, the younger children especially appreciate the repetitiveness of a rotating menu.

If your child is bringing a lunch or snack from home for Aftercare, an outing or because they do not like the lunch on the menu that day, it must be homemade. To support our work about food we ask parents to send their child to school with whole foods, nothing factory-made. Only food on the list of approved foods can be brought to school. In past years we have had to ban certain nuts because of life-threatening allergies. At this time we have no such case in school. Notices will be sent to all parents should that change. Please call and ask if you would like something to be added to the list and we will consider it.

Suggested snacks and/or packed lunches for school trips: fresh fruit; fresh vegetables; non-processed cheese; raw nuts; plain raisins and other dried fruits; whole-milk yogurt; whole-milk kefir; bread; butter and jam or honey; olives; sandwiches filled with canned fish and butter, cheese, almond butter and honey, butter and jam or honey, jamón ibérico, peanut butter and jelly, hummus, tahina and honey, or tortilla francesa; left-over dinners or lunches from home.

Head Lice

Lice infections are very common and should not cause embarrassment to children or parents. In an effort to keep lice cases to a minimum this year, the school will check children's hair weekly for lice. They will also check if they see a child scratching his/her head repeatedly.

If a child has lice the school will contact the parents. We ask that you not send your child to school again until s/he has been treated for the lice and all the nits have been removed from his/her hair. Please do not send a child to school with nits in his/her hair. Even if the child has been treated, no nits can remain.

Parents should repeat the lice and nit removal after seven days to avoid reinfestation.

Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays are very important in every child's life. In the Montessori school we have a special ritual called the "Celebration of Life" that is held on the day of the child's birthday, or as close as possible to his/her birthday should it fall on a weekend or holiday. Parents are asked to send a photograph for each year of the child's life for the celebration.

Presents and Parties

Faculty and employees of City Country School are not allowed to accept gifts from parents or children, nor are they allowed to attend children's birthday parties, unless their child is attending the party and they attend as a parent. These policies may seem rigid, but they are essential to maintaining the institution's professionalism. If you would like to give a book or another gift to the classrooms or the school, we would be delighted to accept it.

We should also mention that we make a conscious effort not to encourage children to make things for us or to do things to please us, because we think their time is better spent cultivating their own interests and abilities in their work of self-creation. Please help us by explaining to your child that what makes the adults who work with them happiest is to see them working for themselves or for the community.

We ask the parents not send birthday party invitations to school for their child to give out. Parents and children can always hand them out at pick-up outside the gates of the school.

Please have either a small party or an all-class party; please do not have a birthday party in which you invite more than half the class, without inviting the other children. Never, ever, exclude only one or a few children from a party.

Sun Protection

Children can spend a lot of time out in the garden at City Country. We ask that parents send their children with a hat and sunscreen to keep in their bag/box at school.

Cell Phones

Cell phone use is permitted only in the Offices or bathroom during school hours. Children are not permitted to have cell phones or any other electronic device during school hours, even in their backpacks.

Fire Drills

There are regular fire drills at the school during which children are taught to evacuate the building calmly and efficiently.

Out and About

Elementary and Adolescent children leave the school frequently. Parents will be asked to sign a single blanket permission slip that will cover all the excursions and outings, as well as morning runs and impromptu exits like walking to the grocery store to get an ingredient, or to the Dehesa to collect pine cones.

Bullying and Problem-Solving

City Country School does not permit any type of bullying: children bullying children, teachers bullying children, teachers bullying parents, parents bullying teachers or staff members, administration bullying..., etc.

The opposite of good negotiating skills based on respect and empathy are emotional blackmail and authoritarianism. Though both these methods can be very efficient short-term (and justified in an emergency), they are addictive, inflationary and limiting. We strive to teach children to use more complex negotiating skills. The policy of City Country School is to cultivate these skills among the staff, so that the staff can serve as a model for the children. Children are also be taught these skills explicitly; they learn about empathy, how to strive to see from another person's perspective, how to name what they need, how to evaluate whether they obtained what they wanted, and how to celebrate achievement, both their own and that of others.

What happens among the adults is passed on to the children. Like any ecosystem, an institution must be kept healthy; negative emotion must be recycled into positive motivation for improvement and change.

City Country School maintains an open-door policy for problem solving. If you find a problem, please call or email the school. The appropriate person will address the problem with you. If a satisfactory solution is not found, please contact the Head of School, Sarah Cardelus, directly by email or by calling the school.

The steps are:

- Stop! Notice that you are in a conflict.
- Protect. Protect yourself and the other person by calming down, walking away, asking for help.
- Express and Listen. Express how you feel and listen to the other person.
- Propose. Suggest solutions.
- Agree. Find something you can agree on, this can include the agreement that you are stuck and that you need more time, or more help.
- Revisit. If necessary or interesting, have a calm conversation about the incident hours or days later and see if there is anything to learn from it.

When we see children in a conflict we do not panic, nor do we rush in to solve it. We see it as the practice for life that it is and we understand that our role is to help the children learn as much as they can from whatever they are going through. With this framing, we are able to help the children more effectively.

1. When we see a problem or conflict we stop and make physical and psychological space for it. We do not see the problem or conflict as something to hide or ignore, but as something to look at, to learn from.
2. We approach the children involved in the conflict and ask if everything is alright. We are careful to protect anyone from verbal or physical aggression.
3. We provide a space in which both parties are heard, without judgment.
4. We ask them to express what happened and how they feel.
5. We ask the parties to express their needs. And to propose possible solutions. If they are unable to find an adequate solution, we accompany the child(ren), listen to their frustrations and help them process them.
6. We do not force a resolution, nor do we act as though there must be a resolution, or that a resolution that satisfies both parties is necessarily possible. We simply create a space in which they can express themselves= and come to some type of agreement, even if that agreement is that they will never get over this.
7. If we see anything that we think might be fruitful to talk about later, even days later, when both parties have fully recovered from the incident, we will bring it up as a question: "Did you notice that...?" It has been our experience that children are interested in the insights that conflicts can give them.

What to Bring to School and What Not to Bring to School

A note on toys: The school's environments are painstakingly prepared for your child's development. Toys brought from home will interfere with this process, so we ask that children leave their toys at home or in the car. This includes all electronic gadgets, phones, tablets, etc.

Inside shoes are a part of the Montessori routine that helps children make the transition into the classroom for work-time when they arrive in the morning. Changing into their street shoes at the end of the day helps them make the transition from school to home in the afternoon, as well. Inside shoes do not drag the dirt from the street into the classrooms. Slippers are quiet in the classroom and are comfortable for children when they work on the floor. Each child needs to bring one pair of comfortable, flexible, quiet slippers or light sneakers that are easy to put on and take off; please avoid laces if your child cannot yet tie his/her shoes, or buckles that are difficult to manipulate. These slippers will stay at school.

Because the garden is such an important part of the school day, we ask that parents send their children to school with rain boots, as well as a raincoat on Mondays. Please send a sun-hat and sunblock, as well.

On Mondays children should bring one complete change of clothes (underwear, socks, pants, shirt) clearly labeled with the child's name, to leave at school. If your child loves to play with water, please send two complete sets of clothes to keep in his/her bag/box.

*Please bear in mind that children should be able to put on their indoor shoes by themselves or with minimal help from an adult in order to encourage their independence.

Appropriate Clothing

Children should come to school appropriately dressed, tidy and clean, but without clothes that they have to worry about protecting. Ceramics, painting, cooking, etc., are a part of daily life at CCS; children should be able to work with abandon.

Please do not allow your child to come to school with suggestive t-shirts, logos or t-shirts with slogans that might be offensive. We require long hair to be pulled back for class, Kitchen and Workshop.

Notes Specific to the Children's House

Clothing

Help your child to feel confident and independent by dressing them in clothing which is simple enough for them to manage with little adult help. Choose clothing that allows for active play and is appropriate for the weather. We recommend: soft pants and leggings without zips, buttons or snaps. Also try to avoid belts, suspenders and dungarees. Labelling your child's equipment and clothing with their name will help prevent loss, confusion and possible upset for your child.

Transitional Objects

Children who start school at the Children's House are allowed to bring a transitional object in order to facilitate the adaptation process; such an object can play an important supportive role in young children's lives. Transitional objects can include a soft toy, a blanket, a family picture. This object can help him/her move from dependence to independence. We ask that parents not bring pacifiers or noisy toys to school; it has been our experience that these objects can become an impediment for the child's adaptation to the school life.

Works Consulted

Allen, Joseph and Allen, Claudia Worrell. *Escaping the Endless Adolescence: How We Can Help Our Teenagers Grow Up Before They Grow Old*. Ballantine Books, 2009.

Bauer, Susan. *The Embodied Teen: A Somatic Curriculum for Teaching Body-Mind Awareness, Kintesthetic Intelligence, and Social and Emotional Skills*. Berkley, California: North Atlantic Books, 2018

Bradley, Michael. *Yes, Your Teen Is Crazy*. WA: Harbor Press, 2003.

Bronson, Po and Merryman, Ashley. *Nurtureshock: New Thinking About Children*. New York: Hachette, 2009.

Bruner, Jerome. *The Process of Education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960.

Bruner, Jerome. *Toward a Theory of Instruction*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966.

Bruner, Jerome. *Acts of Meaning*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Carr, Nicolas. *The Shallows*. New York: W. W. Norton Publishing, 2010.

Crawford, Matthew. *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work*. New York, NY: Penguin Publishing, 2010.

Crawford, Matthew. *The World Beyond Your Head: How to Flourish in an Age of Distraction*. New York, NY: Penguin Publishing, 2016.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Flow*. New York: Basic Books, 1990.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Creativity*. New York: Harper Collins, 1997.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *The Evolving Self: A Psychology for the Third Millennium*, New York: Harper Perennial, 1993.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Finding Flow*, New York: Basic Books, 1997.

De Botton, Alain. *Religion for Atheists*. London: Penguin Books, 2012.

Duckworth, Eleanor. "Tell Me More": *Listening to Learners Explain*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1987.

Duckworth, Eleanor. *"The Having of Wonderful Ideas" and Other Essays on Learning and Teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1996.

Dweck, Carol. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, New York: Ballantine Books, 2006.

Egan, Kieran. *The Educated Mind: How Cognitive Tools Shape our Understanding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Egan, Kieran. *Getting it Wrong from the Beginning: Our Progressi vista Inheritance from Herbert Spencer, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.

Egan, Kieran. *Learning in Depth*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Ewert-Krocker, Laurie. "Unraveling 'The Mystery of the Adolescent' and Finding What is Fundamental," *The NAMTA Journal*, Vol. 33, no. 3, Summer 2008.

Gardner, Howard. *Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books, 1993.

Gardner, Howard. *Intelligence Reframed*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.

Gardner, Howard. *The Disciplined Mind*. New York: Penguin Books, 2000.

Gray, Peter. *Free to Learn*. New York: Basic Books, 2013.

Harpaz, Yoram. *Teaching and Learning in a Community of Thinking: The Third Model*. Dordrecht: Springer Publishing, 2016.

Harpaz, Yoram. "The Science of Learning: Communities of Thinking," *Educational Leadership*, v. 58, n.3, November 2000.

Harpaz, Yoram. "Approaches to Teaching Thinking: Toward a Conceptual Mapping of the Field." Mandel Leadership Institute, Jerusalem.

Hawkins, David. *The Roots of Literacy*. Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2000.

Hart, Tobin. *The Integrative Mind: Transformative Education for a World on Fire*. London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014.

Himley, Margaret and Patricia F. Carini. *From Another Angle: Children's Strengths and School Standards*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2000.

Ingold, Tim. *Making*. London: Routledge, 2013.

Johnson, Steven. *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2010.

Holt, John. *How Children Fail*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1995.

Holt, John. *Instead of School*. Boulder: Sentient Publications, 2004.

Kegan, Robert. *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Kegan, Robert. *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994.

Kegan, Robert. *Immunity to Change*. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business Press, 2009.

Kegan, Robert. *An Everyone Culture*. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business Press, 2016

Kovner Kline, Kathleen, ed. *Authoritative Communities: The Scientific Case for Nurturing the Whole Child*. Springer Science, 2008.

Lamm, Zvi. *Conflicting Theories of Instruction*. McCutchan Publishing Corporation, 1976.

Leonard, George. *The Way of Aikido*. New York: Penguin, 2000.

Louv, Richard. *Last Child in the Woods*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2008.

McKibben, Bill. *The Age of Missing Information*. New York: Random House, 2006.

Miller, Lisa. *The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving*. New York: Picador Press, 2015.

Montessori, Maria. *The Absorbent Mind*, BN Publishing.

Montessori, Maria. *Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook*. New York: Schocken Books, 1965.

Montessori, Maria. *The Advanced Montessori Method*, Volume 2. New York: Schocken Books, 1973.

Montessori, Maria. *From Childhood to Adolescence*. Montessori Pierson Publishing Company, 2007.

Montessori, Maria. *Education for Peace*. Montessori Pierson Publishing Company, 2007.

Montessori, Maria. *The Advanced Montessori Method*. Massachusetts: General Books, 2009.

Montessori, Maria. *To Educate the Human Potential*. Montessori Pierson Publishing Company, 2007.

Publishing

Montessori, Maria. *Psychogeometry*. Amsterdam: Montessori-Pierson Publishing, 2011.

Montessori, Mario Jr. *Education for Human Development: Understanding Montessori*. Oxford: Clio Press, 1992.

Murray, Donald. "Write Before Writing," *College Composition and Communications*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Dec., 1978), pp. 375-381.

Murray, Donald. "One Writer's Secrets," *College Composition and Communication*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (May, 1986), pp. 146-153.

Newport, Cal. *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*. London: Piatkus Books, 2016.

Nodding, Nel. *Happiness and Education*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Palmer, Parker J. *The Courage to Teach*. San Francisco, John Wiley & Sons, 2007.

Perkins, David. *Future Wise: Educating Our Children for a Changing World*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2014.

Perkins, David. *Making Learning Whole: How Seven Principles of Teaching Can Transform Education*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2010.

Pink, Daniel. *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*. New York: Riverhead Trade Publishing, 2008.

Pink, Daniel. *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. New York: Riverhead Trade Publishing, 2011.

Postman, Neil. *The End of Education*. New York: Vintage Books, 1996.

Ratey, John J. *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*. New York: Little Brown and Co., 2008.

Reed, Edward. *The Necessity of Experience*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.

Ritchard, Ron. *Creating Cultures of Thinking*. New York: Wiley & Sons, 2015.

Rose, Todd. *The End of Average: How to Succeed in a World that Values Sameness*. UK: Penguin Random House, 2015.

Rose, Todd. *Dark Horse: Achieving Success Through the Pursuit of Fulfillment*. New York: Harper One, 2018.

Ryan, Richard and Edward L. Deci. "Bridging the Research Traditions of Task/Ego Involvement and Intrinsic/Extrinsic Motivation: Comment on Butler (1987)," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 1989, Vol. 81, No. 2, 265-268.

Sennett, Richard. *The Craftsman*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

Sergiovanni, Thomas J. *Building Community in Schools*, San Francisco: Jorn Wiley & Sons, 1994.

Siegel, Daniel. *Brainstorm: The Power and the Purpose of the Teenage Brain*. Penguin Random House, 2013

Sokol, Bryan, et al. *Self-Regulation and Autonomy: Social and Developmental Dimensions of Human Conduct*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Smith, Frank. *The Book of Learning and Forgetting*. New York: Teachers Press, 1998.

College

Stone, Michael K., and Zenobia Barlow. *Ecological Literacy: Educating Our Children for a Sustainable World*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2005.

Turkel, Sherry. *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. New York: Penguin Press, 2015.

Whitehead, Alfred North. *The Aims of Education*. New York: The Free Press, 1967.

Willis, Judy. *Research-Based Strategies to Ignite Student Learning; Insights from a Neurologist and Classroom Teacher*, Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2006.

Wolf, Aline D. *Nurturing the Spirit in Non-Sectarian Classrooms*. Pennsylvania: Parent Child Press, 1996.