



CITY COUNTRY SCHOOL

Handbook for the Eighth Year

September, 2019

School Motto

Bring your whole self!

School Purpose

To teach children to learn from the world.

School Dictum

Educate the core, it is outside of time.

August 2019

Dear Friends,

As I drink my tea on the front porch of an old wooden farmhouse in New York, the geese are squawking across the dawn sky from Canada. The geese are my signal to write the annual Welcome letter to the families of City Country School. They are my signal that I will soon be crossing the Atlantic toward the eighth year of the adventure of creating a school in which children can begin to find out who they are, what they love and how they want to live their lives. Each child's discoveries will be different from the discoveries of every other child in the school (and the world), each life will be different. This is the great lesson we have to keep in our minds: each child is one-of-a-kind, but we live in a world of averages and standardization, especially in education. Children are talked about as if they were identical molecules of an inert gas, rather than as the complex, multi-dimensional beings that they are.

To say a child is smart, or honest, or shy, or unkind, or generous, or funny, is meaningless. No one seems to stay within their label if you observe them closely. My shy daughter can stand in front of an audience and improvise. My son, I am told, has beautiful table manners at other people's houses! I've seen many bizarre combinations of qualities: kind to animals, and cruel to people; rigorously honest in card games, and a casual liar in conversation; orderly at school, and a mess at home; with an unerring sense of direction, and unable to read a map; a mental mathematics genius, and not capable of understanding geometry. I myself become exhausted if I set foot in a gymnasium, but have no problem in an intensive yoga class. To say a person will be successful in life because s/he has high grades in school is untrue. We all know people who have been brilliant in school and lost in life, as well as people who have been lost in school and brilliant in life.

Sometimes it can be difficult to stay conscious of what we know to be true about the individual when normative thinking and generalizations dominate our culture. We know our child cannot be reduced to any number or percentile, yet it can be difficult to trust an individual's own path, when people around you are telling you, in a panicked tone, that if your child does

not do this or that thing by this or that time, he or she will not “succeed.” Science, which has brought some of this upon us with its developmental ladders, averages, standardizations, and big data sets, is beginning the process of restoring the individual to the center of the question. Science is coming to understand the importance of studying differences, jaggedness, context-dependence and uniqueness, catching up with what we know to be true but sometimes forget: that no two people are alike, that no two paths are the same.

It has seemed to me, and it was a central reason for beginning the school and structuring it as we have, that education has been used as a way to categorize people, to flatten out the human personality, to rub off the sharp edges of uniqueness and to create conformists. If we are to avoid this what should our school look like? What supports the discovery and cultivation of the true self? What supports a deep confidence in that true self? What do children need?

They need to use their minds *and* their bodies throughout the day. They need: enough silence to discover their own rhythms (not bells and loud speakers); conversations that look closely at individual needs in a specific situation (not rules); abundant choice and opportunities to explore and learn at their own pace (not programmed learning); expansion and pleasure (instead of stress and pushing-through); internal desire to concentrate and to connect to the work (not requirements); the inter-connection of all human discovery (not fragmentation of knowledge); admiration for others (rather than comparison with others); collaboration (not competition); a culture that is humble and wise (rather than ego-driven); the diversity of mixed age groups (rather than sameness); long-term relationships with unique adults who are teaching the child (rather than interchangeable teachers teaching a subject matter); unstructured time and freedom to play. Most of all, children need us to trust their process.

This year we will be focusing on the individual. We will resist generalizations in every possible way. We will strive to see each student in his/her context, in his/her situation, within his/her own family system, as a

unique individual. We will be careful not to extrapolate from one context to another, not to label, not to judge and not to pre-judge! We will offer this expanded vision to all the adults in our environment, as well, including parents, of course!

So, I, in the company of all the faculty and staff of City Country School, with great pleasure welcome you to our eighth academic year. Thank you for your trust in the school. A special welcome and thank you to the new families who are joining us this year, we are glad to have you!

Sincerely,

Sarah Cardelús
Head of School

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PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

There is only one subject matter for education, and that is Life and all its manifestations.

- Alfred North Whitehead

Mission

Our mission is to provide an education that supports children in their self-creation, in the development of their passion for learning and in their connection to the world.

Montessori

City Country School is a Montessori school in Madrid for children three to fifteen years old, committed to the Montessori approach to instruction in all aspects of the school: from how we present academic subjects, to how we listen and speak to the children, to how we prepare the environment, to how we assess the child growth. City Country School is a Montessori school that is alive and, therefore, evolving to meet the needs of the XXI century child. In the one hundred years since Maria Montessori founded her first school, the family, society, culture and the child have all changed, in ways large and small; City Country School strives to take those changes, as well as subsequent scientific and educational research, into account in all areas of the school.

City Country School has evolved the curriculum. Its spiral, fully integrated structure has remained, while some subjects have needed reframing and/or the addition of more up-to-date content (Geography, the Sciences and History, for example), some have gained a more central role (Kitchen, Writing, Physical and Creative Expression, for example). Montessori did not contemplate a school in two languages, but our day and age demands it. School is more complex than it was in Montessori's time, because our society is more complex.

The City Country School Continuum of Learning

... any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to a child at any stage of development.

-Jerome Bruner

In the Children's House the three-to-six-year old child develops their autonomy, focus and concentration through work with concrete materials in the prepared environment, which includes freedom of movement and choice of activity. The Montessori-trained adult in the environment demonstrates the use of the materials and protects and cultivates the young community. The autonomy, focus and concentration that the child has discovered and developed in the Children's House through their own work is built upon by the child in Elementary, where the social aspects increase in importance and collaborative work begins.

The Elementary child's imagination is stimulated by the grand themes of Cosmic Education and the opportunity to take frequent trips outside the school. The morning is a long, uninterrupted academic work cycle of three hours during which time the students receive academic presentations of the Montessori curriculum of Mathematics, Geometry and Cosmic Education (history, the sciences, geography) and Language. During the three-hour work cycle students are free to choose their own work, under the watchful eye of the Montessori-trained adult who helps them remain focused and progress in all areas. Time is set aside throughout the year for community meetings, group discussions, camping trips, long walks and games. The Kitchen Classroom is central to the Elementary experience, as is the work of self-expression and self-discovery through Clay, Configuración, Aikido, and Portfolios. The Montessori-trained adult supports the child's work of exploration of the world by creating an environment in which the child can continue to grow in autonomy, by mediating community life and by presenting materials and experiences to the child.

The important work of abstracting and creating meaning through the use of concrete materials and through lived experience continues in the Adolescent Program, where the trained adult creates an environment in which the adolescent can find meaningful work in an intentional community with adult guidance. Classroom work in Mathematics and Language

continues, while the work of the Humanities and the Sciences is grounded in real work of the land and authentic interaction with society. In the Adolescence Program, a significant part of the week is set aside for the essential work of self-discovery through physical and creative expression in the form of music, theater, studio art, dance, craft making, cooking, debate and discussion, Aikido, hiking, and so on.

Learning to learn, creating meaning, developing an internal locus of evaluation, becoming autonomous, are internal and gradual processes. Day-to-day progress is barely detectable, but the extremes are quite distinct: just like your child's growth. Moving along this continuum the child creates meaning that slowly builds into an autonomous personality with a unique understanding of the world.

The continuum of permanent learning and growth begun in the Children's House and continued through Adolescence, becomes a way to respond to life, a way to understand the world: a collaboration between one's inner impulses and the world's opportunities and challenges.

City Country School and Montessori

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

A Montessori 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).

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 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. In contrast, 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 good life is a meaningful life with a true connection to the world.

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).

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" (Palmer) 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 rock we are holding in our hand, we struggle to understand ourselves. Questions we ask of the rock, are questions we must ask of ourselves. If, instead of studying the great thing itself, one studies a textbook about rocks, 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

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 Importance of Nature

Superficially, the world has become small and known. ...There is no mystery left, we've been there, we've seen it, we know all about it.

We've done the globe and the globe is done. This is quite true, superficially. On the superficials, horizontally, we've been everywhere and done everything, we know all about it. Yet the more we know, superficially, the less we penetrate, vertically. It's all very well skimming across the surface of the ocean and saying you know all about the sea... As a matter of fact, our great-grandfathers, who never went anywhere, in actuality had more experience of the world than we have, who have seen everything. When they listened to a lecture with lantern-slides, they really held their breath before the unknown, as they sat in the village school-room. We, bowling along in a rickshaw in Ceylon, say to ourselves: "It's very much what you'd expect." We really know it all. We are mistaken. The know-it-all state of mind is just the result of being outside the mucous-paper wrapping of civilisation. Underneath is everything we don't know and are afraid of knowing. (From "New Mexico," D.H. Lawrence)

D.H. Lawrence wrote that in the 1920's! If he could only see us now that we really *do* know everything. We sit at our computers with what feels like the entire world at our fingertips, just one click away from anything, anytime. We forget what's not there, we don't even recognize our loss. As Richard Louv tells us in his deeply disturbing book, *Last Child in the Woods*, our sensory world has shrunk, our experience is impoverished. We no longer actually experience our world; the mucous-paper wrapping between us and

our world has grown thicker and pixelated: “There is something wrong with a society that spends so much money, as well as countless hours of human effort—to make the least dregs of processed information available to everyone everywhere and yet does little or nothing to help us explore the world for ourselves” (Edward Reed).

Anthropologists are well aware of a central paradox of supposedly primitive oral cultures: that with “greater formal education comes lesser knowledge” (Egan 2010, 15). This lack of knowledge of the natural world results in impoverished thinking that threatens its very existence. In our commitment to addressing the “catastrophic ignorance of the natural world and its cognitive consequences” (Egan 2010, 17), every student when they begin Elementary is given a topic from the natural world to study and create a portfolio around for the rest of their time at CCS. This program is explained in the section of the *Handbook* entitled “Learning in Depth.”

Children develop and learn about the world through their senses. If a child’s real experience is replaced by the screen, their development is disturbed. But it is not necessary to go all the way to the screen to find that there are new and heavy filters between children and the natural world: the scarcity of natural surroundings in cities and suburbs, the constant narration and instruction about nature by adults instead of free and personal experience by the child, parental fear of the child hurting themselves, structured activities in every free moment of a child’s day. Maria Montessori understood the importance of the senses in the development of the child and made the largest and most important section of the Children’s House the area of Sensorial Materials.

The Sensorial Materials of the Montessori Children’s House serve a particular purpose: to help the child refine and sharpen their senses so that they can more fully appreciate the world, so that they can live a more saturated life, so that they have the ability to create more meaning, to understand more deeply. The Sensorial materials are not an end in themselves; they are still mediating the world. The child must be provided with the real thing in order for those materials, which in the classroom are not embedded in any real context in a child’s life and are therefore without meaning, can take on meaning, can connect the child to the world. What is the use of those fine distinctions of smell or touch if the child cannot then have

them come to life in the experience of preparing and eating food? What is the purpose of being able to distinguish subtle shades of color if the child is not provided with time and colors and freedom to explore on paper? What is the purpose of learning to distinguish the finest sand paper from the roughest if the child cannot then use clays and sands and chalk to make things? The Sensorial area must be supported by real experiences of making and doing in the garden, in the patio, in the art room, in music, with song, rhyme, movement and play.

City Country School is an urban school with a country soul. We understand that for small children to find the feeling of wide-open newness that nature can provide it is not necessary to actually be in the countryside (though that would be really, really nice). To benefit from the restorative capacity of nature, a child can lie under some bushes and watch the light filter through the leaves. In the patios of both schools there are plants to lie under, water and sand to play with, wooden structures to climb on, a kitchen garden to plant, water, weed and harvest. In Elementary the kitchen garden is integrated into the curriculum, becoming part of their studies and project-work. The Elementary groups also visit the Dehesa de la Villa often, organize visits to other parks and the botanical gardens, and go camping.

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. (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 (please read the work of Sherry Turkle from M.I.T.). 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 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:

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.

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.

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. 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.

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" (Harpaz, *Journal of Supervision and Curriculum*). 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.

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.

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.

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 student at City Country School is encouraged to evaluate themselves, to struggle to understand the quality of their own work and actions. Not having grades, tests, or uniform work, problematizes a dependence on external judgment, rendering it difficult to maintain. 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).

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.”

To value and preserve the child’s sense of wonder and awe. We worry a lot at CCS about this 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.”

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. How can a person hear himself but in an environment that allows both time and peace? 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.

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 circumstances 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 group are a place where many children will come face to face with some of their fears and limits, and overcome them.

Motivation

What Flow theory suggests is that if you don't get intrinsically involved in what you do, then you may learn things because you are forced to; but, that type of learning is not very useful to you in the future. It's not something that you would internalize, appropriate, and feel ownership over. You own the kind of learning that you want to acquire for its own sake because you are interested in it. The things you learn in order to avoid failing, or for extrinsic reasons, may be present in your long-term memory, but it is not going to be as accessible because it is something that you had to acquire "against the grain," so to speak.

-Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

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 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).

Self-Governance 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.

School Governance

The more the young are placed in subjection, without power to exercise their own wills, the more easily do they fall prey to the perils of which the world is full.

-Maria Montessori

At City Country School you have to participate; everyone is part of the crew, not just a passenger, and, as such, must help to maintain the school and to solve its problems. At some point during the week, every child has a job to perform for the school: feeding animals, putting rags and mats in the washing machine, unloading the dishwasher, hanging things out to dry, sweeping the hallway, wiping down the counters in the kitchen classroom, watering plants, etc. Each classroom holds Community Meeting whenever necessary; it is a ritualized and protected space in which important issues can be discussed

and decided.

If we want young people to be engaged in the real world when they leave school, to feel that they can effect change in the world, then we need to provide a way for them to practice and learn about making a community function while they are in school. We think it is a good idea to discover at a young age that there is not always a solution that will work for everyone, that virtues can conflict one with another and that sometimes the best that can be accomplished is an uncomfortable compromise. We think school (and the family) is the best place in which to make the wrong decisions and see the consequences; City Country School is a place to make mistakes safely.

Evaluations

City Country School's objectives for its graduates are reflected in what the school chooses to evaluate and how we make those evaluations. Our view of the child is holistic. The CCS evaluation has two parts: a descriptive narrative of the social, emotional and academic progress of the child, and a rubric of virtues/strengths, and skills. They are based on careful observations and ongoing assessments of the children and their work. Ongoing assessments are designed to track the child's progress in all areas. We put great emphasis on assessing each child's progress in the skill of learning to learn. The skill that supports the four major life skills --learning to do, learning to know, learning to be in community, and learning to be in the world--is the ability to learn.

Children become aware of their own learning in many ways and over the course of many years in the Montessori classroom. They can see their own progress by looking at works on the shelves that they could not do last week, last year. In the mixed-age classroom, they can see what the older children do, what the younger ones are learning. They begin to notice what helps them learn and what doesn't. They begin to differentiate the feeling of having understood something thoroughly from having understood it partially. They understand what it feels like to return to a work that they do not quite understand and having to figure it out over again. They begin to know what it feels like to have understood something deeply. They learn that when they have a deep understanding of a concept they can play with it in other

contexts: it becomes a tool in their hands. They learn the pleasure of connecting ideas, having intellectual breakthroughs, and they begin to seek them out with intentionality. They become aware of when they need to ask for help, and whom they need to ask. Once they become aware of their learning process, they can begin to figure out their needs. Whether they need to sketch something, build something, or act something out in order to understand it. They know whether a conversation will help or distract them. They learn to recognize the difference between being in flow and being lost or bored. They get to know their learning rhythm: whether they should do the hardest things first, or just after having a snack, whether they need one snack or two, whether they need to read a book between works, or take a walk, or have a chat with a friend at the snack table. They learn that they cannot maintain focus by the window, or at a group table, or on a rug on the floor. They learn whether they should work every day for a short time on several different things, or focus on one thing for most of the morning for an entire week or month, before moving on to something else. They learn to organize their tasks, their time, their space, their concentration and their effort. They learn about what works for them.

Evaluation reports are written twice a year, closely followed by the opportunity to meet with the teachers to talk about the evaluations, if you wish to. There are also two parent-teacher conferences per year.

Trust: School Climate and Community

When you choose a school for your child, you become a member of a school community. There are many types of schools and, therefore, many types of school communities. A school like City Country School hopes to create a positive, vibrant, committed, active and effective community.

What is the single most important ingredient for such a community?

Trust.

Supporting and nurturing all personal and professional relationships is trust; without it, we cannot act effectively. Six personal and institutional qualities make relationships of trust possible: benevolence, competence, authenticity, integrity, respectfulness, and self-trust. If any one of these six qualities is not present, trust is compromised.

Let us examine these six qualities from the perspective of the school as

an institution. Benevolence is good intention, kindness and good will. A benevolent institution puts public good above profit, subscribes to a charitable view of events, is thoughtful and self-reflective. It strives to create a non-judgmental, non-reactive and tolerant environment in which to work and, in this case, learn.

Competence is proper execution of its mission. The school has to work well on a professional level: it must be reliable, organized and effective.

An authentic institution is one that has a clear sense of itself: knows its mission, knows that it always needs to improve, and presents itself honestly.

Integrity from the perspective of an institution is the ability to stay the course, to stay in its authenticity, to maintain its core values and principles.

Respectfulness from the perspective of the institution assures that it is 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.

The final quality, self-trust, for an institution means that the school is confident in its ability, its judgment, its systems and its intuition. It trusts its own purpose and strives to ensure that all involved have 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.

English and Spanish

No one can doubt the importance of speaking more than one language in today's globalized world. English, which serves as the *lingua franca* of the world, has a particular relevance. As an American School, English is also an important element to our identity as a school. For these reasons, we believe that English is a fundamental part of our school's culture and community. We have a linguistically diverse student body. Some students speak one language at home, while others speak two or more. Some speak only Spanish, while others speak only English. At our school, we help students to learn in both languages. Research shows that developing two languages during the school years has a positive effect on intellectual growth and cognitive development, gives children a better understanding of their native language, develops positive cultural identity and understanding of other cultures, gives the child a head start in language requirements for high school and college, increases job opportunities in many careers where knowing another language is a real asset, develops a lifelong ability to approach problem-solving from multiple perspectives.

Our approach to language learning mirrors our approach to all

learning. First, the process by which a second language is studied affects the results. Children must first become aware of a second language: begin to notice it, take in its sound. Once they become aware of it, they begin to absorb it and to form the oral base of the language upon which later language learning is built. Before children can truly learn in a second language, they must first learn to “enjoy” in a second language. If the second language is imposed on a child in a way that makes him or her feel pressured or insecure, the natural process of language learning could be hampered for the rest of the child’s life.

We want our children to communicate their ideas and feelings, to express themselves and to understand each other. We also want them to develop and prime cognitive skills that are the underlying motor of language learning. In the past, many experts remitted to the idea that the brain was only able to handle one language at a time, and that learning a second language “takes away” from the first language. In contrast, more recent models of language learning pose that while two languages may seem unrelated, the mechanism for learning both languages is the same. The “Iceberg Analogy” can explain the relationship between a first and second language: on the surface, the languages appear to be separate, but the Common Underlying Proficiency is what allows the individual to perform cognitively demanding processes such as problem-solving, abstract thinking or literacy. This Common Underlying Proficiency is common across all languages and is the basis for learning, regardless of the language. In addition, the Common Underlying Proficiency is actually stimulated by learning a new language, so that learning more than one language can actually enhance cognitive skills.

Multilingualism has come to be recognized as an asset; having two or more languages is a form of enrichment. This new way of viewing bilingualism is related in part to new theories about language learning itself, which show that learning one language does not inhibit or detract from other learned languages. In fact, learning more than one language actually aids in the development of higher-order cognitive skills. This new orientation raised the status of the “second” language in bilingual schools, showing its equal value and importance to the curriculum as the “first” language. In the case of our school, we seek to support English-speakers, Spanish speakers

and bilingual children in the learning process. Parents would like their children to be competent in their native language, as well as in a second language. In order to achieve this goal and boost cognitive development, we propose a bilingual approach to language learning called dual language immersion.

In Dual Language Immersion, children are exposed to both languages and learn in both languages. Many parents worry about their children losing “content” (both cultural, linguistic and conceptual) when working in the second language. However, we often underestimate a child’s capacity to understand and learn in a second language. They are hard-wired for language learning and so it is much easier for them than it is for most monolingual adults.

At City Country School we provide instruction in English and Spanish. Our primary aims are bilingualism, biliteracy and cross-cultural competence. We provide: “scaffolding” or sheltered instruction strategies in both languages; ability grouping for targeted purposes, with frequent reassessment based on strengths and weaknesses in different skills; separation of languages, where the adult will only speak one language at a time without translating, while allowing students to use native language resources such as peers and bilingual dictionaries; plenty of time for student interaction (such as through the use of cooperative learning), allowing students to practice their new language skills with their peers; and varied contexts in which to practice language skills.

One benefit of dual-language programs is that the school includes both adults and students who are native speakers of each language and serve as models for the language. In addition, students get to know others from a different cultural background, which increases cross-cultural competence and reduces the likelihood of negative stereotypes and prejudices. Because both languages are respected and valued equally, we could classify dual language programs as having an “intercultural orientation,” as opposed to the “assimilationist orientation” of monolingual immersion programs.

PART TWO: THE PROGRAMS

The Prepared Environment

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 any extraneous or distracting elements. 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, 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. What does it mean to the child to have the day follow no natural rhythm? To have it split into fragments arbitrarily marked by the whims of a bell? "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").

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 she is 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 him the means necessary for his 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 there are no secrets that effort and desire cannot reveal.

Areas of the Children's House

The Garden

This is also a prepared environment for children three to six years old. There is a sandbox, water, a kitchen garden, climbing frames and space to play. Children have rain boots and a rain jacket at school, as well as a change of clothing. They are permitted to go outside regardless of the weather.

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.

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.

Care of Self

In this part of the prepared environment children can practice grooming: washing their hands, brushing their hair, cleaning their faces.

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. They will be quite self-conscious that it is meant for someone else to look at, so they will appraise it continually themselves. But, if

they use the Workshop enough, the children stop making their work for another 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 children work with native English speakers and native Spanish speakers. They learn to read and write in their mother tongue while hearing songs and stories, and having conversations (one-sided at first) in their second language. They slowly build an oral base in their second language, begin to speak, and, in Elementary, once they are reading and writing in their dominant language,

begin to read and write in their second language.

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 her 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

The Montessori adult sparks the Elementary children's powerful imaginations, and provides them with a vision of the order of things, narrating and demonstrating impressionistically 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 problematizing 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*, not simply know.

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 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).

In our continued effort to cultivate depth we have followed the lead of the educator Kieran Egan in his Learning in Depth Program. Each child in Elementary receives a special topic about the natural world. The topic is their Specialty for the duration of their time at CCS. Egan describes the process as “an exploration of some area of knowledge that may initially seem uncomplicated but will gradually come to be seen as infinite” (Egan 2010, 26). This program “is based on the belief... that learning about the world around us is intrinsically interesting to everyone. The more we know, the more interesting it becomes. It is boring only to the ignorant. That’s just how our minds are. This project is an attempt to strike at the heart of ignorance” (Egan 2010, 34).

Each student will create a portfolio of work about their Specialty over the course of their schooling. One afternoon will be dedicated to Portfolios; they will also be free to investigate their Specialty through other classroom work, projects, collaborative work, Going Out and work at home.

Eggomotion: The Mind in Motion

Eggomotion is a visual language to help understand the mind. We believe that the mind is our most basic tool, and unless we understand how it works we are like a little boat in a storm, without a means to navigate in our lives. Eggomotion is the work of Vivienne Sarobe and stems from thirty-five

years of clinical and teaching experience. It integrates the principal theories of the mind, such as neurology, the systemic approach, psychiatry, cognitive behavioral theories and psychoanalysis, as well as mentalization and mindfulness. The objective of using Eggomotion is to help the whole community—staff, students, parents—keep the mind in mind. When we understand our minds we begin to understand others, we become less impulsive, more compassionate and more competent. The learning process becomes understood, helping to balance our efforts with our needs, such as pleasure and quiriness. Eggomotion is in harmony with the school ethos and our motto to “Bring your whole self”; it helps us to understand our whole self. And to understand is to love.

There is map of Eggoland (the map of the mind) and the Eggos in each classroom. Teachers and children will use these tools to express what elements of the mind and states of mind are in play at any given moment. This year we will be using Eggomotion to create a common vocabulary in the school for talking about matters of the mind.

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 Play, Cooking, Aikido, Ceramics, Song, and Portfolio creation.

Throughout history and across cultures human beings have used music, movement, language and art to discover and express their inner lives. When a child uses these tools he makes real to himself and to others the existence of an inner life: his 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 you use 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, and play. For some children doing chemical experiments, pruning, weeding, planting, making bread, building something, or planning outings or gatherings, will be the most satisfying means of expressing their inner selves. What is important is that City Country School is a community of practice; everyone is making something and we are genuinely interested in one another's creations.

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.

In the Elementary program we want children to receive the very special and unusual experience of working with one material, one process, one topic for an extended period of time (six years). We have chosen Clay, Play (in the activity Configuración), Aikido, Specialties, and Kitchen, as the five areas of concentration.

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 seamlessness. 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 develop this natural sensibility.

Students have long, uninterrupted, studio time in which to explore the materials and express themselves through them. No commentary is offered on the work.

Configuración

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 introduced *educación creadora* to Elementary in 2014. We now rent space just up the block for *Configuración*, a workshop in free symbolic play during which the children use cardboard boxes, fabric and tape to create and play, both together and alone. Students in Elementary and Adolescence have *Configuración* sessions year-round under the guidance of practitioners trained in *educación creadora*.

Our after-care program is organized along these principles and staffed by *educación creadora* practitioners.

Aikido

Aikido, which means *the way of harmonizing with the spirit of the universe*, is studied for six years in Elementary and continued 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, as well as all Elementary work cycles, begin with a short sitting meditation. All 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

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

- Peter Rheinhart

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 everyday. They use a sourdough captured from the air thirteen 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 every day, but it is not the same every day. 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. ("Childhood to Adolescence," Maria Montessori)

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 his peers. She emphasizes the need for Elementary education to take the child out of the classroom and challenge him: "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 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 artifacts.

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), the project that is a cultural tradition in the school (for example, the Christmas party, camping, hiking a GR trail).

Writing Workshop

Nulla dies sine linea (Never a day without a line).

Writers will tell you there is nothing worse than being given a piece of paper and being told to write something, anything. Most writers simply cannot do it. Most children cannot do it, either. Children do not learn to write by being told to write, but they do learn other things: that writing is impossible, for example. Or that writing is silly busy-work to be gotten through as efficiently as possible. The reason why neither writers, nor most children, can write on command is that writing is a process with several stages: rehearsal, drafting, revising and editing. Unless a child is comfortable with the process of writing and aware that interesting writing is part of daily life and takes time to ripen, writing will always feel alien and forced. It will always be drudgery. In the same way that some children, when faced with the blank page cannot write at all, some children begin to write with barely a reflection, dispatching the work quickly, as though brushing their teeth. What they write is not interesting to them, or to the reader. These children are even more lost to the process of writing than the blocked children are!

In the same way that you cannot expect a child to pick up the violin and learn to play by himself, you cannot expect a child to learn to write by himself. If the child has a deep need to write (that is, if the child is a writer), he will teach himself with the help of the great writers whom he will read obsessively, but this is true for the few and writing is a precious skill that all children should develop. Writing must be taught explicitly and practiced daily.

Physical Education and Aikido

Physical education at City Country School is holistic; we go for walks in the neighborhood and in the countryside, we climb trees and rocks, we play games, jump rope, dance, and study a martial art called Aikido. In Elementary we begin each day with Spark: 30 minutes of physical exercise intended to raise the children's heart rates. Upper Elementary goes with their teacher to the *pistas* to play games, while Lower Elementary plays games with their teachers in the patio.

Spark is a wonderful opportunity for teachers to play with their students, to create bonds with them that have nothing to do with classroom

work. Spark also gives teachers an opportunity to observe their students in the intensely social environment of games, where much is revealed about their social skills and emotional states. Teachers enter the classroom with an insight into each child's state of mind, before the day in the classroom even begins.

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

Mornings of the week after Christmas vacation are set aside for games. Upper Elementary and Adolescence play The World Peace Game. While Lower Elementary plays extended role-playing games.

City Country School Adolescence

We begin the third year of The Adolescent Program this September. This program addresses the specific developmental and cognitive needs of the adolescent.

Our mission is the same for Adolescence as it is for the rest of the school: to provide an education that supports adolescents in their self-creation, in the development of their passion for learning and in their connection to the world. We accomplish this by creating prepared environments in which adolescents can engage in meaningful work and study in the context of an intentional community of peers, with the support of rigorously prepared adults and in full partnership with parents.

CCSA derives its plan of work and study from Montessori's writings about adolescent development, and is modeled on the work of the established Montessori adolescent programs in Ohio and Sweden. It is a place where adolescents are understood and celebrated. A place where they are given the means, the time and the support to create, to express, to discover, to contribute to society, to learn from practice, to immerse themselves in subjects and work of personal interest and community value: a place where adolescents are needed and valued members of a community that they, in turn, need and value.

Our aim is to cultivate centered young adults confident in their own abilities and strengths, capable of deep work, cognizant of, but not paralyzed by, their weaknesses, secure in the knowledge that they are part of the human community, ready and willing to act in the world.

This is a tall order, requiring a collaboration of school, adults, adolescents, and their parents; it can be accomplished by recognizing and celebrating 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 extreme 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 13). The “sense of adventure, vitality and courage” that characterizes healthy adolescents can become thrill-seeking, risk-taking and recklessness in adolescents when their intense need for community, meaningful work and adult guidance is not met.

Abundant opportunity for dialogue and self-expression, an intentional community of peers, meaningful intellectual and physical work, as well as fully present, centered adults other than parents, are essential to the process of moral self-discovery and conscience development for the adolescent.

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. Adolescence is a short period during which the young person creates his/her societal self *out of the materials available around him/her*. It is a biological imperative that the adolescent look outside the family at this stage of development. Our job is to provide an environment full of excellent materials, meaningful work and adult support within which the adolescent can create a genuine, resilient, conscious, self-confident self.

Early and mid-adolescence (from twelve to fifteen) is often a very stressful time of life. Schools and our contemporary culture tend to make the process of self-creation especially difficult by asking adolescents to remain physically still for many hours a day, doing work that means little to them, isolated with their peers and 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 and intentional community of peers, adult support and guidance, and meaningful work with the opportunity to *give back* to society. This imbalance results in feelings of uselessness, disconnection and dependence.

The Structure of the Adolescent Program

CCSA meets the needs of the adolescent with a varied, challenging, interesting and supported plan of work and study: Creative Expression Workshop; Hiking and Adventure; Overnight Residencies; Montessori Mathematics and Geometry; English Language and Literature; Mind and

Emotions; Spanish Language and Literature through an intense study of the City of Madrid; Aikido; Science Occupations; Humanities Projects; Camping and Travel. What began as Care of Self exercises in the Children's House and expanded to Kitchen Classroom and Camping in Elementary, bears fruit in the Adolescent Program where the adolescents are asked to care of themselves and others. What we eat, why we eat, and how we eat, become important questions to consider and discuss with the help of readings, experiments, reflection, practice and observation.

Description of Montessori's Plan of Study and Work at City Country School

For Maria Montessori the key element of the Adolescent program was the community life of the adolescents. Contemporary research in developmental psychology supports Montessori's observation of the adolescent's need to be with his/her peers; it is a tribal stage of life. One of the founders of the 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. If you watch adolescents all day, everyday, you will see how every cell of their being is looking for, is hungering for, thirsting for knowledge of the social organization. You will watch them alternately joyful and desperate in their pursuit of an understanding of the ways that humans in their tribe establish themselves in a social structure
(Ewert-Krocker 135).

CCSA provides beautiful, safe, harmonious, culturally rich communal environments in which adolescents can collaborate on meaningful work with the guidance of prepared adults. If adults do not provide these spaces for adolescents, adolescents will create impoverished spaces themselves: in the street, in *botellónes*, and online.

The travel, camping, and overnight stays to harvest figs, olives and cherries, provide the adolescents with the 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 to be understood, face to face conversations and authentic human connection are essential; the use of cell phones and personal computers during school time by the adolescents is not permitted.

The adolescents will be responsible for all aspects of their community life: the meal planning, the cleaning, the cooking, the organization of their work rotations, the creation of the Code of Civility, the community meetings, their micro-economy. 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.

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..." (Montessori 64).

Academic Studies in Adolescence

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 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. English is the official language of the Adolescent Program. Mathematics classes are in English, as are the Science and Humanities work, the weekly seminar discussion, meetings and the weekly Council meeting. Formal English Language class is held twice a week, during which time students read, write (draft, revise, edit) and discuss literature. The Montessori adults in the environment are native English speakers who will direct themselves to the students in English at all times. Their study of mind and emotion is with a native English speaker. The school itself is in Spain and, as such, some of the specialists and experts, the shepherd and the music teachers are not English-speakers. One long afternoon a week is spent in Madrid dedicated to the study of Spanish language, culture and literature with a native Spanish-speaking secondary school teacher.

The study of the sciences and humanities in the Adolescent Program are place-based. The projects for the sciences are called Occupations. For example, Botany can be studied through an Occupation that involves the planning, planting and care of the kitchen garden and the orchard, or through an Occupation to collect samples and create a catalog of the wild plants in the area, or an Occupation that does a comparative study of botanical collections, city gardens or urban farms. Chemistry and nutrient cycling can be studied in an Occupation that analyzes, maintains and enriches the soil for a particular crop, in an Occupation that studies composting, in both city and countryside. Physics and Engineering can be studied in Occupations that involve the planning and building of structures, the study of electrical and transport systems, in the water delivery systems for the city, which are then extrapolated to an irrigation plan for the farm or school garden. Animal husbandry, Comparative Anatomy and Zoology can all be studied through Occupations in collaboration with farmers and shepherds. The Science

Occupations involve extensive fieldwork, as well as classroom academic and laboratory work, when appropriate.

The academic study of the Humanities takes a two approaches: through the text, in English, and through the artefact in Spanish. Spanish Humanities Projects can include the study of the history of Madrid, as well as of the Sierra Norte and the La Vera where they go to harvest and work with local farmers, shepherds and artisans. They explore these areas in long walks, research in local libraries and collections, and create maps and nature guides of the area. Possible Humanities Projects include the study of the Roman history of the area, the study of the pre-history of the region, the study of the civil war in the area, the study of the local government, or the mapping and researching of the *trashumancia* and the history of shepherding. Subjects that are not connected to the land itself can often be connected to the students' own experiences, for example, the study of the Greeks and early democracy is directly relevant to their experiences writing their own codes of civility for their community and their self-governance. Studies of economic history, production and trade, are related to their own experience establishing their micro-economy and their production of goods to sell. The study of Revolutions is always very immediate and interesting to adolescents.

Self-expression through music, language, art and movement is another 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" (Montessori 63). 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 to respond to it in ways that are not 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. This essential expressive work of the adolescent is supported by professionals of music, movement, theater and art, who can teach techniques and forms, coach performances, provide guidance, and be mid-wives to the creative work of the adolescent.

This year we will experiment with creating an adolescent band. All the students will form part of Band, which will have a ninety-minute class every week. Students will choose the genre, the instruments, the songs. It will require intense collaboration and deep listening of many different types. We are hopeful that their first gig will be at the Christmas Party on December 14!

The essential work of understanding themselves and others, of working and living in community, is supported by a professional therapist who, in a weekly seminar, leads the adolescents in an exploration of the mind, and by prepared adults whose role is to support the adolescent community and to work alongside the adolescents.

**CCSA
Schedule,
Fall 2019**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	9:30- English 11:00 Math	9:30 Creative Expression 11:00 Spanish	9:30 Aikido 11:00 English	9:30- English 11:00 Math	9:30 Aikido 11:00 Math
	13:00 Lunch and free-time	13:00 Lunch and free-time	13:00 Lunch and free-time	13:00 Lunch and free-time	13:00 Lunch and free-time
	14:00 Emotional 15:30- 17:30 Ceramics	14:00- 17:30 Spanish	14:00-17:30 Kitchen/ Culture	14:00 Science 16:00-17:30 Music/Band	14:00- 16:00 Micro- economy

PART THREE: SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Important Note: CCS 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. Submit an application of admission.
3. Read the *City Country School Handbook*.
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.

CCS 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

school system 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 in collaboration.
- 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.

Criteria for families wishing to enroll their child

- Parents must thoroughly understand the mission and pedagogy of City Country 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 student.
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 for 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 and the Parent's Association. Publication in print or online of all or any documents, or sections of documents, internal to the school (including this *Handbook*) is not permitted.
14. To reimburse the school for the cost of infractions of their child, such as

breaking equipment, damaging didactic materials or damaging the facilities.

15. 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 Cardelus, 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

There are Parent Education Evenings several times a year. These evenings are an opportunity for the school to educate parents in the school's philosophy, method and curricula. It is important for parents to understand why the school is organized the way it is, how it works, and what it teaches. It is also important that parents learn how to support their child's learning process at home. One parent from each family is expected to attend the meetings. Claudia will send a reminder and keep a register of attendance.

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 two teachers, whenever possible.

Long Meeting: to talk about more complex situations. These meetings have no time limit, take place outside of the regular school schedule and require the attendance of two teachers, the Head of School and 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. No one not authorized to pick up your child will be allowed to pick up your child unless a parent has called the school and spoken in person 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, bad cough, persistent 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.

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 immediately drive the child to the hospital or centro de salud, depending on the gravity of the situation, or call an ambulance. The school will notify the child's parents immediately of where the child is being taken.

Parent Observations

One parent from each family is invited to observe in their child's classroom each year. Notice about 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. If you are accompanying your

child into school we recommend that you park in the parking lot of the grocery store La Despensa just down the street from Elementary, c/Doctor Juan Jose Lopez Ibor.

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.

If your child will be very late to school, 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.

A bell will be rung at 8:55. Parents are asked to leave the schools by 9:00. We ask that you leave through the gate at that time. If you stay until after the gate closes, a teacher will have to leave her/his group and accompany you to the door to see you out. If you feel your child needs to spend more time with you in the patio in the morning, please arrive earlier so that your child is ready for you to leave by 9:00. 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.

There is a daily staff meeting at 4:15. Please do not enter the patio or the school at pick-up, unless you have a meeting with a teacher.

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.

Afternoon Snack (*Meriendas*)

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 children do not appreciate a lot of variety at lunchtime; there are so many new things at school, that children appreciate the repetition of a rotating menu.

If your child is staying for the Free-Play Aftercare program, please send *merienda* from home. 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. Because of life-threatening allergies, we ask that parents not send cashews or pistachios, or anything containing cashews or pistachios, to school or outings.** Please call and ask if you would like something to be added to the list and we will consider it.

We encourage parents to prepare their child's *merienda* in the company of their child.

Merienda foods allowed at school:

- Fresh fruit
- Fresh vegetables
- Non-processed cheese
- Raw nuts (except cashews and pistachios because of severely allergic children)
- 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, non-processed raw-milk cheese, almond butter and honey, butter and jam or honey, jamón ibérico, hummus, tahina and honey, or tortilla francesa

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.

At the end of each month there is a birthday cake with candles that the children whose birthday it was that month blow out. Children with birthdays in July will be sung to in June, children with birthdays in August will be sung to in September.

Birthday cakes, like all the food at City Country School, will be authentic; that is, we will make the most delicious cakes we possibly can without substitutes or corner-cutting!

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 to bring birthday party invitations to school.

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.

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 during school hours.

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 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 has a zero tolerance policy for bullying. No bullying of any sort will be tolerated: 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. The faculty at CCS is receiving several special trainings with therapists during the year.

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. We ask them to express what happened and how they feel.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.

Indoor 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. 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. Please bring a toothbrush and toothpaste, as well.

Because the garden is such an important part of the school day, we ask that parents send their children to school with a pair of rain boots, as well as a raincoat to leave in school. Please send a sun-hat and sunblock to leave at school, as well. All 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 should 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 him / her in clothing which is simple enough for him / her 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.

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