

# CREATIVE GARDENS



## Staff Handbook 2024



## **Our Leadership Team**

**Garrett Wilhelm** is a 23 year veteran of the education industry working all the up from a part-time after care program to Head of School of local Montessori schools, eventually founding his own school then leaving to rebuild a local non-profit school allowing it to grow to be the Reston area's finest. A father of 5 children himself, Garrett has discovered the key to educating young minds is to engage them in meaningful education that speaks to their individual strengths. Garrett has been featured in magazines such as WIRED, Hechniger Report, The Atlantic, and is a published author for EdSurge and Education Dive Magazine. Garrett is excited to bring his years of learning to fruition by opening Creative Gardens in June of 2020!

**Travis Beene - Director**

**Jessica Wingfield - Director**

**Ashlie Hobson - Transition Coordinator/Educational Support**



## **Mission Statement**

Creative Gardens is committed to crafting a deeply personalized education unique to each child by paying close attention to how they learn while simultaneously providing high-quality child care.

## **Approach to Learning**

Creative Gardens provides personalized education and high-quality child care to students ages 6 weeks to 5 years, with a robust after-school program for school-aged children, rooted in evidence of how they learn. We use Virginia core standards of learning as our base to translate nicely to our students' next school and quantify their outcomes based on pictures, videos, samples of work, observations, and parent partnership meetings to provide a clear and transparent understanding of our student's competencies.

Creative Gardens uses a learning cycle to ensure no matter what classroom your child is placed in, the learning and quality of care is cohesive throughout their entire experience with us.

**Spark** - We know that a child has to be engaged in their learning. We present new concepts to our children with a sense of wonder and spark their curiosity to learn more.

**Engage** - We allow our children to drive their own understanding of new concepts to allow them to explore and hone the problem-solving skills they will need in an ever-changing world.

**Share** - We use technology to open the doors to our student's learning in a new and exciting way. We have learned that the best education for our students sharing equity in the outcome.

## **Inspirations to our approach:**

**Montessori Method** - We draw heavily from the staple Montessori tenant, "Follow the Child." We use Montessori materials and scope/sequence to foster a love of learning in our students and to appeal to hands-on, concrete learners. We love the true preparation for life approach that Montessori has led the industry in for many years.

**Reggio Emilia** - We love the 100 languages of children. Reggio in our classrooms shows itself in our learner-centric environments, our attention to personalized learning, and our love of the child's ownership of their classroom in displays of art, placement of furniture and materials, and ensuring our educational environments meet the needs of each learner.

**Waldorf** - Thematic learning is imperative to young learners as it takes all subject matter and pulls it into one theme to allow the learning to make sense to our learners and be cohesive.

## Student Outcomes

In crafting a truly personalized education for our students, we must make sure that we are quantifying success in the child appropriately. Our outcomes are measured in four ways:

- 1. Virginia Standards of Learning.**
- 2. Documentation of Learning Evidence.**
- 3. Parent Partnership Goal Setting.**
- 4. The Child's View.**



# Legal Disclosures

## **Non-discrimination Policies**

### **Equal Employment Policy**

Creative Gardens serves in, and practices, the principles of equal employment opportunity. The Center recruits, hires, trains, and promotes individuals, and administers all employment decisions, conditions of employment, and personnel actions, without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin or ancestry, marital status, status as a disabled or Vietnam Veteran, or status as a qualified person with a disability, or other protected status, in accordance with applicable laws. We will continue to ensure that the knowledge, skills, and potential of all employees are utilized throughout the organization. Any incident or situation that you believe involves illegal discrimination should be brought to the immediate attention of your supervisor or to the Center Director.

### **Americans With Disabilities Act**

Creative Gardens supports the policies of the Americans with Disabilities Act and is committed to treating all applicants and employees with disabilities in accordance with the requirements of that act. The Center will engage in an interactive process with any person with disabilities seeking reasonable accommodation, subject to the requirements of the ADA. Information concerning individuals' disabilities and their need for accommodation will be handled with confidentiality and discretion.

### **Policy Against Harassment, Discrimination and Retaliation**

Creative Gardens is committed to providing a work environment that is free of all forms of unlawful harassment and discrimination. We prohibit unlawful harassment and discrimination in the workplace, including sexual harassment.

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, physical, or visual conduct of a sexual or harassing nature may constitute unlawful harassment if:

- Submission to such conduct is made an explicit or implicit term or condition of employment.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting an individual or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of either unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Creative Gardens will not tolerate sexual harassment or any other form of harassment or discrimination based on sex, race, color religion, national origin, age, marital status, veteran status, handicap, or disability.

Harassment or discrimination in the workplace by any employee will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. This policy applies not only to how employees treat each other but how employees treat Creative Garden's students.

## **Procedure**

If you are aware of behavior that you believe to be harassing or discriminatory in nature, you have an obligation to report the behavior immediately to either your supervisor or the Center Director (703) 723-4500. Providing confidential information of this type will enable Creative Gardens to take appropriate action to ensure that employees enjoy a work environment free from harassment. Information gathered under this policy will be kept reasonably confidential while allowing Creative Gardens to investigate the matter.

We will investigate any report of harassment. We will take whatever corrective action is deemed appropriate, including disciplinary action or termination of any individual who violates this policy.

Employees who make a good faith report or participate in an investigation under this policy are protected from retaliation. Any person who retaliates against any individual because he/she reported a good faith concern or participated in an investigation will face corrective action up to and including termination.

## **Reasonable Accommodation**

Creative Gardens is committed to providing quality child care to all persons regardless of race, creed, color, gender, national origin, lifestyle, or ability to pay. However, instances may arise when an employee's personal values or beliefs may conflict with a specific curriculum or childcare program.

Creative Gardens wishes to honor the cultural, ethical, and religious beliefs of employees. At the same time, Creative Gardens must ensure that the care or treatment of children and families is not compromised when employees exercise their personal beliefs. In cases where there is a conflict between child care requirements and individual employee's religious beliefs, that employee may request to be excused from participating in a specific aspect of the child care curriculum or program. To ensure that such exclusions do not compromise child care, staff members are asked to inform the Director, confidentially, in advance, and in writing when they become aware of specific aspects of child care that are contrary to their beliefs. It must include the specific care or treatment from which the employee is requesting to be excused and the reason for the request.

The Directorate will decide whether to accommodate the request. The Directorate will make a reasonable effort to provide alternative scheduling and or placement to avoid potential conflicts

that could compromise child care. The request and the decision shall be maintained in the employee's personnel record.

The Center will attempt to make reasonable accommodations for all employees' requests for exclusion from child care resulting from a conflict with the employee's cultural, ethical, or religious beliefs. If the employee refuses to resume child care responsibilities after review or attempted accommodation of his or her request, disciplinary action, up to and including termination, may result.

# Employment

## **Employment Policy**

Creative Gardens provides equal employment opportunities without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, or veteran status. The goal of Creative Gardens is to match qualified individuals to available job openings. Individual education, experience, skills, and personal capabilities of every job applicant will be carefully evaluated in choosing a qualified candidate. It is the responsibility of every manager of Creative Gardens to ensure affirmative implementation of this policy.

Creative Gardens conducts all employment practices in compliance with federal and state employment laws. Employment is contingent upon a prospective employee having satisfactorily passed all parts of the employment process which includes successful interviews, acceptable references, a health and immunization assessment, a background check, and a drug screen.

Employment with Creative Gardens is “at will” which means that either the employee or the employer is free to end the employment relationship at any time for any reason or no reason.

## **Identifying Qualified Candidates**

- All vacant positions will have an approved job description listing the essential job functions, competencies, and ideal candidate trait profile.
- All vacant positions will be posted within Creative Gardens for a period of five working days (Monday-Friday).
- All qualified internal candidates who apply during the initial five-day posting period will be granted an initial interview.

The personnel records of internal candidates will be reviewed for work records, qualifications, and eligibility. The Director should review the employee files before recommending an internal candidate for hire. The top candidates for all Program Lead, Teacher, or Teacher assistant positions should meet with Program Leaders prior to being recommended for hire. Program Leaders can conduct their meetings with the candidate(s) and make their collective recommendations and provide feedback to the Director. If a Program leader is unable to meet with the candidate(s) during that designated period, then the Director shall rely upon the input and opinion from the other Program Leader(s).



## **Pre-Employment Processing**

New potential hires must satisfy the pre-employment processing requirements including presenting the required documents before hire, passing the drug screen, criminal background check, licensure verification and fingerprinting in applicable areas, and meeting the employee health requirements.

- Tuberculosis Health Screening Tests - To accept employment with Creative Gardens, new hires must provide the Center Director with a valid Tuberculosis or TB health screening test result for our files. The Fairfax County Health Department requires these reports to be less than 2 years old.
- Criminal Background Check - Before employment, all final candidates must provide a satisfactory Criminal Background Check under policy 3076 and the requirements of the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- Eligibility to work in the United States - All new employees will provide an I-9 form and other documentation showing that they are eligible to work in the United States.

## **Employment of Youth**

All hires must be at least 16 years of age or older. Following Virginia statute, some positions require the minimum hiring age to be 18.

## **Verification of Academic Credentials**

Candidates being considered for positions that require specific academic preparation must provide the necessary information to allow for verification of the specific academic preparation as a condition of employment.

## **Staff Qualifications and Training**

### **General Qualifications for Staff Members**

Staff should demonstrate an understanding and respect for the individual personalities and needs of children including:

- Sensitivity to their feelings and problems;
- An ability to share in their enthusiasm and their desire to learn;
- An application of skills to provide a challenging environment for learning; and
- Use of materials, activities, and experiences that foster exploring, discovery, and questioning, to help children satisfy their natural curiosity, gain mastery, and progress toward higher levels of physical, emotional, and intellectual development.

Each staff member shall also demonstrate willingness and ability to work amicably with her/his colleagues. In addition, each staff member must be able to work toward achieving the Center's goals within the context of its philosophy and its policies.

# Academics

**Open Door Policy** - Creative Gardens is committed to a true “open door,” experience for all of our families.

**Parent Partnership Meetings** - We value the partnership between our families and the center as it is what sets us apart from any other school in the area. We want these quarterly meetings to be useful, insightful, and to the point. Because we have transparency into the classroom, these meetings become celebrations of their child’s learning journey.

**Requesting Parent Partnership Meetings** - Each family will have 2 mandatory partnership meetings per year.

**Reporting** - We are able to analyze students’ learning in many ways. Parents have access to many different and comprehensive reports that can allow them to have a deeper understanding of their child’s competency and abilities.

**Commitment to Transparency** - At Creative Gardens, we hold transparency of our student’s learning experience to the highest. To build trust one must earn it and we do so by showing parents, even when they are at work, that their child is receiving the best care and education.

# Expectations

**Child** -At Creative Gardens, we know that every child learns differently. We also know that for all, clear and defined boundaries and expectations for the child should be set in the classroom and at home to help regulate the child's inner self and to allow for normalization.

Creative Gardens is a safe, loving, accepting, and caring environment. Maintaining that harmony is achieved by having open and honest conversations with our families so that everyone stays on the same page and we work together to find solutions to behavioral issues.

Solutions could be behavioral management tools, learning materials, or recommendations. Creative Gardens cannot provide diagnosis, only information regarding their everyday and opinions (rooted in data) and suggestions for what, when, and where to look outside of our own amazing and talented staff.

\*To protect the quality and overall mission, Creative Gardens reserves the right to terminate the enrollment of any child at any time.

**Parent** - At Creative Gardens we want parents to be engaged with their child's learning as we know it is important to the success of their early education. We ask that parents please check their feed daily to keep up with what is going on in the classroom and any other events that the school is hosting.

We ask that our parents respect the classroom and other students by making sure their language and behavior are appropriate around or near the children. We ask that if they would like to have a detailed conversation with their educator, they please schedule time with them to do so.

**Educator** - You as educators are carefully selected to embody a true sense of love and care for what you do. We take our time in selecting the very best to ensure the very best in our classrooms.

Our educators are expected to provide a deeply personalized experience for every child each and every day. This is achieved by:

**A prepared environment** - our educators come early and leave later than the students to ensure that the environment is clean, organized, and prepared each morning for the child's exploration and is left clean and organized in the evening.

**Documentation of the child's learning** - our educators are expected to document each child's day to the best of their ability. This is to include the work each child completes, the groups of children each child spends their time with, and the learning outcomes of each new concept presented. By modeling this consistent documentation, we encourage our children to do their own documentation.

**A sincere care for the children** - our educators are trained to have equity in the learning outcomes of their students. This sincerity and honesty is a key piece to providing an amazing and personalized education for our children.

**A morally sound example to follow** - we know that the best way to educate children in SEL (social-emotional learning) is to embody the practices in which we teach, within ourselves. Our educators strive for wellness both mentally and physically and educate our children on why and how to do so themselves.

**A broad approach to learning** - our educators are taught to be open-minded in approaches to learning. We keep our minds open to effective approaches for our children. Our educators adopt the "life-learner," approach to always keep their minds open to new ideas and approaches to meet the needs of the children in their classrooms.

# Policies & Procedures

## **Classroom Categories and Ratios:**

Maintaining the classroom ratio is our first priority at Creative Gardens. By keeping ratios required by licensing, it aids us in keeping the children accounted for that are in our care. We expect that teachers know the number of children in their classrooms at all times. It is up to the teachers in the classroom to maintain teacher-to-child ratios.

### **Infant Classroom:**

Ages: 6 weeks to 12 months

1 Teacher : 4 Children

### **Toddler Transition Classroom:**

Ages: 12 months to 16 months

1 Teacher : 4 Children

### **Toddler Classroom:**

Ages: 16 months to 24 months

1 Teacher : 5 Children

### **2's Classroom:**

Ages: 2 to 3 years

1 Teacher : 8 Children

### **Preschool Classroom:**

Ages 3 to 4 years

1 Teacher : 10 Children

### **Kindergarten Prep Classroom:**

Ages: 4 to 5 years

1 Teacher : 10 Children

### **After School Program:**

Ages: 5 to 12 Years

1 Teacher : 20 Children

## **Accident/Injuries/Biting Procedures:**

Teachers are required to document all accidents as soon as possible. If there is an injury to the head or an injury that has left any markings (scratches/cuts, bruising, swollen lip, etc..) the parent will be notified immediately via telephone call from the Director.

### **Creative Gardens Biting Policy**

*This policy is for children ages 2.5-5 years. Please note that for children ages 12 months to 2.5 years biting is a response to lack of self control, problem solving skills, and limited vocabulary due to age. We take these cases on a case by case basis and follow through with steps 1 and 2.*

**Biting:** At Creative Gardens we take biting very seriously. We understand that it can happen and that it is not ideal for either children and their parents. Please see our biting protocol by incident:

#### **Incident 1: Biting Procedures**

1. We comfort the child who was bitten. It is important to give this child a lot of love and attention at this time.
2. We inform the biter of their wrong actions. Immediately after we have attended to the bitten child we turn to the biter and tell him/her. "I can't let you bite. Biting hurts. Look at (the child that was bitten), he/she is crying." We are firm with re-direction but are never harsh.
3. We redirect the behavior of the biter. We show the biter an alternative behavior. We demonstrate how to pat and touch softly. We then remove the biter from the area to one that is less frustrating and engage him/her in an activity.
4. We notify the parents of both children who are involved. The caregivers complete this form and give a copy to both families. The record of the incident is logged and kept on file in the office.

#### **Incident 2:**

After a child's 2nd biting incident the family will be asked to meet with the Director and the child's teacher to develop an action plan. The staff, with the help of the parents, will implement the action plan immediately. At Creative Gardens we will utilize a "Bite Box" to help the student understand the difference between things that go inside the mouth vs things that should not be in their mouth.

#### **Incident 3:**

After the 3rd incident we will ask the family of the student biting to pick up their child that day. When the child returns we will ensure that we have additional employees in the classroom to monitor the student and provide him/her with extra love and attention. We want to ensure we are using all measures to prevent biting from happening in the classroom.

***Incident 4:***

If the plan has been followed through by both the staff and the parents, biting should not occur again. If biting continues to occur, we may kindly ask that the family find an alternative childcare placement. Please understand that this is a last resort decision. We want all of our students to be successful and we will do whatever it takes to ensure their success.

**First Aid Procedures:**

Teachers at Creative Gardens will respond immediately to an ill or injured child. After their initial assessment, the teacher will notify the Director who will then provide the appropriate measures.

Teachers are encouraged to have CPR and First Aid Certifications however it is not a required certification according to licensing. It is best practice that at least one person in the classroom be certified in CPR/First Aid.

**Medication:**

If a child has been prescribed medication, only a staff member that is certified in Medication Administration can give the medication. Teachers can only administer diaper creams and lotions as long as they are non-prescription. We must have a diaper cream administration form on file for the child for it to be applied.

No fever or pain-reducing medication or multi-symptom medication containing pain-reducing medications (acetaminophen or aspirin) will be administered at the school. No medication that is listed as “as needed” will be administered unless it is an emergency medication for a federally protected disabling condition. Medication should always be given to the on-site manager and never to the teacher.

**Sunscreen/Diaper Ointment/Insect Repellent**

Creative Gardens staff are not permitted to apply insect repellent. We have our grounds sprayed to eliminate mosquitos, ticks, ants, etc. Sunscreen and diaper ointment are permitted and will only be

applied with authorization from the parent. Parents/guardians will be required to fill out the Sunscreen and Diaper Ointment form available in our classrooms or at the front office. Sunscreen and diaper ointment will be applied by a staff member to children under the age of 9. Children over 9 will apply it themselves while being supervised by a staff member. If diaper ointment is used for the treatment of the rash, and the rash persists, a doctor's note may be requested by the director of Creative Gardens.

### **Discipline:**

Teachers at Creative Gardens have been trained on positive behavior support in the classroom. Teachers will practice positive redirection techniques when trying to facilitate appropriate behaviors. You are encouraged to use role play, modeling, and other proven techniques to teach social-emotional behavior.

Corporal punishment or verbal abuse of any kind will not be permitted under any circumstance at Creative Gardens. Corporal punishment or verbal abuse is cause for immediate termination of your employment with Creative Gardens.

If poor behavior becomes a consistent problem in the classroom, parents will be asked to attend a meeting with the director and classroom leader to discuss a behavior intervention plan otherwise known as a BIP. Each BIP will have goals for the child that are encouraged daily. Positive reinforcement will be used when goals are met by the student.

### **Food From Home Policy:**

Parents must provide prepared infant formula/breast milk in plastic bottles that are labeled with the child's name and date of use. An emergency supply of ready-to-use formula is to be provided by parents to use in case of an emergency. Bottles are to be warmed only once. All unused formulas will be discarded or returned to the parents at the end of the day. Bottles that contain medication/supplements will not be served at Creative Gardens. When the child reaches the age of 2 they will be transitioned from a sippy cup to a regular drinking cup. No child over the age of 2 will be allowed to bring food from home unless they have an allergy and is deemed necessary by a physician. Parents must fill out a "Food From Home" form to bring food from the home into the school. The form must be signed by the parent and the child's physician.

### **Nap Time:**

Students at Creative Gardens are required to take a daily nap. Infants and School Aged Children are the only classrooms that are not on scheduled nap routines. All other ages are required to have at least a 2-hour nap or quiet time in the classroom. Cots should be placed 12" apart from each



other. Each child must have their own designated cot with their name written on it. Cots or nappers are required to have a top sheet and a blanket. During nap time the ratio of students changes. For children 16 months the ratio will drop by 1/2/

For example, in our 3-year-old classroom, the ratio is 1:10. During Nap time this ratio will be 1:20 (all children must be on their designated cot for this to happen). **SIGHT and SOUND** must be kept for all children during nap times. If children are not interested in a nap after 30 minutes they should be given a quiet activity to keep on their cot. For students 12 months of age to 5 years, parents must provide a fitted crib sheet for the cots and a blanket.

During nap time we ask that teachers use this time to update their SmartCare reports for their students or cleaning.

Nap time should NOT be used for the following by the teacher:

- Sleeping
- Talking on their cell phones

### **Lost or Missing Child Procedures:**

Attendance and head counts of children should be completed every 15 to 20 minutes. We ask the teacher to do this so that no child is ever missing from our care. If you recognize that a child is missing from your care you should follow these steps:

1. Notify the director immediately.
2. Check ratio count & attendance to ensure the child is not absent.
3. Thoroughly search the classroom or where the child was last seen.
  - a. Check inside and outside of all bathrooms, hidden areas, other classrooms, playgrounds, closets, and storage areas.

***If a child is not located within 10 minutes from the time the child is missing call 911.***

### **Outdoor and Playground Procedures:**

Children need time outside to enjoy the sun and release energy. Outdoor playtime is essential to their health and well-being. At Creative Gardens we require our students to have at least 1 hour of outdoor play time throughout the day. If the weather does not permit, we ask that the teacher prepare an adequate indoor activity.

***Outdoor play will not occur if:***

- The temperature is below 20 degrees
- The temperature is over 100 degrees
- The air quality/heat index is code red or higher

On the playground, teachers must always be within SIGHT and SOUND of the students while playing. We ask that teachers always use active monitoring while on the playground. We understand that there will be times when teachers talk but, we ask that you still use your best judgment and maintain supervision of the students. Failure to adhere to playground safety procedures could result in disciplinary action.

Staff members are encouraged to take ownership of our playground safety and equipment by filling out the Playground Inspection Checklist Form.

**Sanitation Practices:**

**Gloves:**

Disposable gloves are provided to our teachers and are to be used as a protective barrier when changing diapers or helping a student use the restroom. Gloves should also be worn when preparing/serving food, providing first aid, and cleaning/disinfecting. Gloves should be used with fidelity as they are the best way to prevent cross-contamination and prevent diseases.

**When using gloves follow these 7 steps:**

1. Put on a clean pair of gloves-never reuse gloves.
2. Provide appropriate care.
3. Remove the first glove by pulling at the palm and stripping the glove off of your hand (inside out).
4. Ball up the first glove in the palm of your other gloved hand.
5. Use the clean hand to strip the other glove off the wrist, turning the glove inside out.
6. Properly dispose of the gloves in the trash can..
7. Wash your hands immediately.

**Handwashing**

Teachers are required to wash their hands when they arrive in their classrooms or in the staff restroom when they enter the school. Teachers should also remind parents and students to wash their hands when they enter the classroom.

## **Additional Licensing Requirements:**

### **Training**

Every staff member at Creative Gardens is required to have at least **16 hours** of training per licensing requirements. We will have at least 3 paid professional development days scheduled out each year. This time will be utilized to train you on curriculum, instructional best practices, licensing, and other training designated by the Creative Gardens management.

### **Child Abuse and Neglect**

All staff members at Creative Gardens are required by the Commonwealth of Virginia to report any and all instances of suspected child abuse and neglect. When a staff member has information or evidence of suspected child abuse or neglect the Director should be informed immediately and Child Protective Services will be notified and given the proper documentation and evidence. Child Protective Services will make the determination on what if any action will be taken.

# Neurodiversity at Creative Gardens

## **1. Admissions Process and Self-Declaration**

During the admissions process, families are encouraged to self-declare any neurodiversity to help us understand and meet the child's needs from the start. A section in our admissions form is dedicated to this, ensuring privacy and sensitivity.

## **2. Gathering Documentation**

Upon a self-declaration of neurodiversity, our administrative team contacts the family to gather relevant documentation. This may include reports from previous schools, diagnostic assessments, and recommendations from healthcare professionals. This information will help us better understand the child's unique needs and strengths.

## **3. Assessment of Needs**

The collected information is reviewed to assess the overall support needed within the classroom setting. We consider factors such as learning accommodations, sensory sensitivities, social-emotional support, and any other specific needs.

## **4. Initial Meeting for Capability Assessment**

If initial assessments indicate that we may be able to meet the child's needs, the Lead Educator of the child's age-specific classroom is briefed and a meeting is scheduled between the administration and the Lead Educator. This meeting focuses on evaluating our capability to provide the necessary support and accommodations for the child.

## **5. Discovery Day**

A "Discovery Day" is scheduled for the child, consisting of an observed period of one hour where we assess the child's social-emotional and behavioral engagement within the class. This observation helps us to understand how the child interacts in our environment and with our educational approach.

## **6. Review and Decision Making**

Following Discovery Day, the teacher and administrative team review the outcomes of the observation and assess whether we can effectively meet the child's needs. This review is thorough, considering all aspects of the child's well-being and educational progress.

## **7. Communication with Parents**

A meeting is arranged with the parents to share the outcomes of the Discovery Day and our assessment. If it is determined that we can meet the child's needs, we proceed with the admissions process, outlining the specific support and accommodations that will be provided. In cases where we may not be the best fit for the child, we commit to assisting the family in finding an alternative placement that can meet their needs.

## **8. Continuous Support and Evaluation**

For children who join our community, we ensure ongoing support and regular evaluations to adapt to their evolving needs. This includes regular communication with the family, specialized support from our

educational team, and access to resources that enhance their learning experience. Our process is designed with care and empathy at its core, ensuring that every child, regardless of their neurodiversity, is given the opportunity to succeed and flourish within the Creative Gardens community.

# General Information

## Hours

Creative Gardens hours are 6:30 am to 6:00 pm. Between 6:30 to 8:00, we have fewer staff members due to the low attendance during these times. By 8:00 am the majority of the teachers have arrived and the children will be in their designated classrooms. The same will occur towards the end of the day as staff members begin to go home. We call these hours “before and after care”. During these times we still strive to provide the best high-quality childcare.

## Sick Leave Policy for Creative Gardens (Revised on 1/30/24)

### Eligibility and Accrual of Leave:

- All employees at Creative Gardens are eligible for 10 paid time off (PTO) days and 3 Leave Without Pay (LWOP) days.
- New employees will accrue their leave benefits, including PTO and LWOP days, after their first 90 days of employment.

### Requesting Leave:

- Employees must give management at least 10 working days notice prior to using their leave.
- For vacations overlapping a school holiday (e.g., a Friday or Monday), the holiday will be deducted from the employee's PTO.
- Teachers must provide detailed lesson plans and materials for substitutes during their absence.

### Absence Due to Illness:

- Absence due to illness ***will be credited as excused if a doctor's note is provided.***
- Excused absences can also be determined by Admin on a case-by-case basis. This includes staff or staff children's illness that requires a parent at home.

### Unauthorized Absences:

- Unauthorized absences disrupt order and can affect classroom ratio standards.
- Repeated offenses may lead to a warning, suspension, or dismissal.
- LWOP days will be determined by unexcused absences.

### PTO for Part-Time Employees:

- Part-time employees working over 32 hours per week accrue 2 ½ days of leave (26 hours) per year.

### **Leaving Early:**

- Unplanned early exits are generally declined unless in emergencies.

### **Grounds for Leave Denial:**

- Overlapping leave requests from multiple employees.
- Insufficient PTO balance or exhaustion of the 3 LWOP days.
- Failure to submit a leave request with a 2-week notice.

### **Violation Measures:**

- Breaching the leave policy, including excessive leave and tardiness, will be handled on a case-by-case basis:
- First Case: Warning.
- Second Case: 3-day suspension of work.
- Third Case: Termination.
- Note: This policy is subject to change and may be revised by the administration as necessary.

## **COVID-19 Leave Policy**

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we are offering an additional 5 days of leave for employees who have been diagnosed with COVID-19. This leave is in addition to our existing leave policies and is available to all employees.

### **Eligibility:**

An employee must have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or be required to quarantine due to potential exposure.

The employee must provide a doctor's note or other documentation verifying the diagnosis or quarantine order.

### **Leave Usage:**

The leave can be taken in full or in increments, as needed.

The leave may be used for quarantine or recovery, but not for any other purpose.

Pay:

The employee will be paid 50% of their regular salary while on leave.

This pay will not be deducted from their existing leave balance.

### **Return to Work:**

The employee must provide clearance from a doctor before returning to work.

The company reserves the right to make accommodations or adjustments as necessary to ensure the safety of the employee and others.

This policy is effective immediately and will be reviewed regularly in response to the evolving situation.

### **Pickup/Drop-Off Procedures for Children:**

Upon arrival at the school, we ask that parents please turn off their vehicle and enter the building with their child. Each parent will check in their child/children using our SmartCare tablet located at the front of the building. Please remind parents to check-in their children each morning as this helps us comply with licensing requirements.

During pick-up, we ask that parents please inform their child's supervising teacher so they can ensure an accurate headcount. Children will only be released only to those individuals who have been authorized on the child's registration form, or added to the list in person, and in writing (email preferably). Individuals should be asked to show a picture ID to verify their identity and authorization when picking up a child. We ask that a minimum age of 16 for individuals authorized for pickup from Creative Gardens.

Please be advised that students picked up after the closing time of 6:00 pm will incur a late fee of \$3.00 per minute. After 10 minutes, the closing supervisor will begin to call the parents and



emergency contacts for the child. If a parent or emergency contact can not be reached after 1 hour (by 7:00 pm), the closing supervisor will notify the Police and the child will be placed in their custody.

## **School Calendar**

Below you will find a list of dates that the center is closed. We strive to serve our families as much as possible but, we also want to give you the staff your much-deserved days off and time to spend with your families.

- New Year's Day
- President's Day
- Memorial Day
- Fourth of July
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day
- New Year's Eve-Close at 3 pm

## **School Closure Information**

We strive to open Creative Gardens regardless of weather conditions. Inclement weather announcements will be made via email, social media, and the Creative Gardens website. If you do not see an announcement, the school will be open for regular business updates. We will use our own judgment on closing should inclement weather arise.

We will close the school if an extended utility outage occurs that impacts the day-to-day operations at the school. These types of outages include power outages, gas leaks, a water main break, or if the HVAC is not functioning. Any and all closing announcements will be communicated in the previously mentioned ways.

## **Who To Contact**

If you have any questions please contact: [Travis@creativegardensva.com](mailto:Travis@creativegardensva.com).. If he is unable to provide you with the information you have requested, he will obtain the answers to the best of his ability and get back to you promptly.

## **Dress Code**

At Creative Gardens, we want our teachers to be comfortable so they can do the best job possible while serving our students. We ask that you wear shoe covers in the classroom or bring a pair of washed shoes to leave inside your room. Please feel free to wear jeans with a professional shirt.

We only ask that your clothes not be revealing or have any holes and that you wear closed-toed shoes. Crocs are permitted.

### **Drugs/Alcohol**

At Creative Gardens, the use of drugs and alcohol is strictly prohibited. Bringing or use of drugs/alcohol on the school premises will result in immediate termination.

### **Cell Phones:**

Cell Phones have become a part of our daily life. We use our cell phones and GroupMe as a way to communicate with each other throughout the day. Please be mindful of the amount of time you spend on your cell phone. Students should be engaged and monitored at all times.

### **Technology for Students:**

Parents send their kids to our school to learn and actively play. At no point during the day should our students (especially our younger students) be watching technology. We love technology and understand that there are many educational apps and websites that our students can utilize. It is unacceptable for students to watch YouTube. Repeated violations will result in disciplinary action. Using your iPad to produce music in the classroom is acceptable.

### **Food Program**

We proudly serve breakfast, lunch, and snacks at Creative Gardens. All of our food is prepared daily by our in-house chef. We offer a variety of nutritious foods set forth by the requirements from the USDA. At each meal, we will serve a protein, a vegetable, and a grain. We should always encourage our students to eat by themselves and become self-sufficient, happy eaters! If a child requests seconds, they will be given them without hesitation.

Each week a menu will be posted in our center and a copy will be uploaded to our website for your convenience. If there has been a change in the menu due to unforeseen circumstances, it will be noted on the menu posted in the center.

**Please make sure you have the menu posted in your classroom.**

### **Resignation from Position:**

Staff will be required to give 2 weeks' notice before ending employment with Creative Gardens. Your leave is use or lose and will not be paid out at the end of your employment. You will not be permitted to use your leave in lieu of your 2 weeks' notice. Creative Gardens will require a written letter of resignation.

### **Final Paychecks for Terminated or Resigning Employees**

At Creative Gardens, we value the contributions of all our employees, whether their journey with us is long-term or comes to an end. In the event that an employee's tenure with our company is concluded, either through resignation or termination, we are committed to ensuring a smooth and respectful transition process. Part of this commitment includes the timely processing and distribution of the employee's final paycheck.

### **Final Paycheck Policy**

Timing of Final Paycheck: Creative Gardens guarantees that an employee who resigns or is terminated will receive their final paycheck within no more than two weeks (14 calendar days) following their last day of employment. This policy is in place to ensure that employees are compensated in a timely manner for all hours worked until their departure.

### **Contents of Final Paycheck:**

The final paycheck will include compensation for all remaining hours worked by the employee, up to and including their last day of employment, at their regular rate of pay. Additionally, any applicable accrued benefits or reimbursements owed to the employee will be calculated and included in this final payment, in accordance with state laws and company policies.

### **Method of Payment:**

Final paychecks will be processed via check and mailed to your address. If an employee prefers a different method for receiving their final paycheck, they must submit a request in writing to the Human Resources department at least one week prior to their departure. Creative Gardens will make every reasonable effort to accommodate such requests, subject to applicable laws and payroll processing limitations.

### **Dispute Resolution:**

In the event of any disputes or discrepancies regarding the final paycheck, employees are encouraged to contact the Human Resources department immediately. Creative Gardens is committed to resolving such issues promptly and fairly, in accordance with our values and legal requirements.

### **Conclusion**

Creative Gardens is dedicated to maintaining transparency and fairness in all aspects of employment, including the process of ending employment. This policy is designed to ensure that all employees departing from our company are treated with dignity and respect, and receive all compensation owed to them in a timely manner. We thank our employees for their service and wish them success in their future endeavors.