

Welcome to Gold Mountain Community School

We are happy you are joining our little community at Gold Mountain Community School. This Parent Handbook explains our educational philosophy and our general policies. If you have any questions, Miss Leeanne is always available to talk to you at info@goldmountainschool.com or at 208-301-1608. We first opened our doors in 2012 and always strive to provide the kinds of spaces, routines, and activities that truly support children's deep need for safety, belonging, and understanding. It is a place where children have the freedom to be themselves, to explore their passions while growing and learning together in a safe, nurturing community. Gold Mountain Community School is truly a place where everyone belongs.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Our teaching philosophy is inspired by the **Reggio Emilia approach** to preschool and primary education. Reggio is student-centered and uses self-directed, experiential learning in relationship-driven environments. The program is based on the principles of respect, responsibility and community through exploration, discovery and play. At the core of this philosophy is an assumption that children form their own personality during the early years of development and that they are endowed with "a hundred languages", through which they can express their ideas. The aim of the Reggio approach is to teach children how to use these symbolic languages (e.g. painting, sculpting, drama) in everyday life. We see young children as individuals who are curious about their world and have the powerful potential to learn from all that surrounds them. We employ strategies that expose children to a wide variety of educational opportunities that encourage self-expression, communication, logical thinking, and problem-solving. Developed in Italy after WWII, the Reggio Emilia approach would grow until by 1991, *Newsweek* was reporting that Reggio Emilia schools were among the top school systems in the world.

Our flexible curriculum at Gold Mountain allows the interests and needs of the children to guide their explorations and activities. Our hands-on experienced-based program includes daily offerings in **math and science, art and drama, music and movement, literacy including foreign languages, and American Sign Language**. We are passionate about helping young children develop:

- a love of learning
- a positive sense of self
- creative thinking
- social and conflict resolution skills

ELIGIBILITY

Our school year program is for children ages 3-8. We accept children who are not potty-trained. Learning is a process, and we are prepared to help your child on their way to being toilet independent.

PROGRAMS

Our school year program follows the Moscow School District schedule, with all of the same holidays and teacher in-service days. The summer program runs from June through August. We offer the following program schedules:

Full Day: Monday – Friday

8:30 AM - 3:30 PM (\$985/month).

Morning: Monday – Friday

8:30 AM - 11:30 AM (\$495/month).

Afternoon: Monday – Friday

12:30 PM - 3:30 PM (\$495/month).

Extended Day: (add extras to package above)

Lunch Hour: Monday – Friday

11:30 AM -12:30 PM (\$140/month *added to plan*).

After Care: Monday – Friday

3:30 PM - 4:30 PM (\$140/month *added to plan*).

Lunch & After Care: Monday – Friday (\$280/month *added to plan*).

Gold Mountain is a mixed age school year and summer program rooted in the Reggio Emilia approach. Within the richly equipped indoor and outdoor classrooms, students are free to choose their learning materials, collaborators, and activities. Each student is assigned a primary caregiver/teacher who will be ‘their person’ by spending extra time getting to know them and being by their side when they need extra comfort and support. These teachers are also responsible for tracking development and working with their students and families to problem-solve, goal set, and plan the next steps in their curriculum.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Because Reggio classroom activities and projects vary from day to day and week to week, so does our schedule. We do provide a morning and afternoon snack. We spend time outside

every morning and afternoon. Our time outside is influenced by outdoor temperatures, weather conditions, and the needs of individual students.

SNACKS AND LUNCH

A healthy snack will be provided during the morning and afternoon programs. We are very happy to accommodate special diets.

Student lunches are NOT provided and must be brought from home. Please send healthy food choices and limit sweets to one item per day. Sweets include: gummy fruit snacks, cookies, jello, pudding, granola bars (unless high in protein), cookie bars, fruit roll-ups, sugary cereal. No candy please. Non-leaking water bottles filled with water should be brought daily.

FEES AND TUITION POLICIES

Registration Fees: A non-refundable fee of \$125 is due at the time of each annual registration.

Supply Fee: Along with the Registration Fee, an annual \$100 supply fee is due upon enrollment.

Tuition Fees: Because we operate on a monthly budget, with expenses that occur whether or not an individual child is present, we do not reduce the monthly charge due to illnesses, vacations, holidays, snow days, or natural disasters. Tuition is charged on a monthly basis during the school year. However, Gold Mountain has no other additional fees or requirements for parents to volunteer for fundraising activities, etc.. There is a 5% discount for additional siblings.

Payments: Tuition is due in full on the first of each month. A three-day grace period is given and payments received after the 3rd will be late. A \$30 late fee will be added to your account. Payments which are two weeks late will be cause for termination of your contract.

Tuition Assistance: We work in partnership with the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP) who provides assistance to low-income families to help pay child-care costs. The purpose of this program is to support families working toward or maintaining employment. Eligibility is based on household income and family size. To see if you qualify, go to the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (<http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov>).

Late Pick Up Charge: Please be walking out the door with your child no later than 11:30 AM or 3:30 PM. If your child is in After Care, you should be leaving by 4:30 PM. The charge for late pickup is \$1.00 per minute and will be strictly enforced. Please be prepared to pay when you arrive.

PICK UP AND DROP OFF: When you arrive at school you will sign your child in with a complete signature and time of arrival and when you pick up your child you will sign out with a complete signature and time of departure. Periodically update your child release form. We will NOT release your child to any unauthorized or unfamiliar people. Even with permission, we will ask for identification from anyone unfamiliar to us.

WITHDRAWAL NOTICE: We require 30 days written notice if your child is withdrawing from Gold Mountain so that others on the waiting list can be notified of an opening.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS POLICIES

Immunization Policy: All children must be currently immunized as prescribed by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. A copy of current records will be required no later than 14 days after your child begins school. Records must be updated regularly, and children whose records are not current will be refused admission until proof of immunization is received.

Illness and Injury: Children who exhibit symptom of illness will stay home for at least 24 hours after symptoms have ceased. These symptoms include:

- Fever of 101 degrees F or higher
- Vomiting during the past 24 hours
- Diarrhea, two or more watery stool within 24 hours
- Draining or unidentified rash
- Eye discharge or pinkeye (conjunctivitis)
- Lice or nits
- Too tired or sick to participate in regular activities

If a child becomes ill at school, they will be isolated and the parents will be notified. If we are unable to reach a parent, the people on the emergency pickup list will be called and asked to pick up the child. In the case of an injury, we will administer first aid as trained and notify the parents if necessary. With serious injuries, we will call 911 first, and then the parents.

We do not administer medication unless your child has allergies and needs an inhaler for breathing or an EpiPen due to anaphylactic shock.

Health Practices: Children and staff wash hands upon entering the classroom and after using the bathroom, before and after eating, and after handling pets. Staff wear gloves when changing diapers or pull-ups. Diapers and pull-ups are disposed of in a covered garbage can. Toys and classroom surfaces are washed and disinfected regularly. Please put sunscreen on your child before dropping them off for school and leave a bottle with us to reapply as necessary. The environment is continually inspected and broken or hazardous materials removed. We participate in monthly fire drills and have a working fire extinguisher and smoke detector. Emergency evacuation procedures are located at both exits. All Staff is trained in pediatric CPR and First Aid and the school is equipped with three first aid kits. We are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

OBSERVATION AND DOCUMENTATION

Documentation of the growth of both children and teachers is another important component of the Reggio Emilia approach. Teachers use observation and documentation to identify strengths, ideas, and next steps to support learning for students. This also helps teachers and parents learn more about what does and does not work for a child. Documentation can be in the form of observations, photography, video, conversation transcripts and/or visual mediums like paint, wire, clay or drawing materials. Teachers can then adjust the dynamics of their classrooms accordingly. Reggio Emilia is a way of observing what children know, are curious about and what challenges them. This allows teachers to reflect on developmentally appropriate ways to help children expand their academic and social potentials. Long term projects connect core academic areas in and out of the classroom. Parents are encouraged at any time to conference with their teacher to set goals or problem solve. Moscow School District also works closely with us to provide developmental resources and support for children and families who want it.

CONFERENCES

We are excited to share your child's progress and invite you a twice-yearly conference. At this time we will discuss goals, celebrations, concerns, and questions that either of us may have. Anytime during the year, we encourage you to share any questions, concerns, or goals you have for your child.

DISCIPLINE

We have put a lot of thought and planning into creating a positive school atmosphere. A deep understanding of where children are in their development plays a major role in our discipline plan.

Here is a list of the things we do to create ease, limit conflict, help children become aware of and responsible for their feelings, needs, and actions, and help them develop self-control and problem-solving skills:

- we provide enough materials to go around;
- quiet spaces are provided to calm nerves and promote relaxation;
- the curriculum is child friendly, child directed and full of choices;
- there is plenty of time to work on and finish projects;
- children are encouraged to request what they want;
- teachers acknowledge and reflect children's feeling and needs;
- children work problems out on their own with teachers nearby ready to assist if necessary;
- conflict is valued as a learning opportunity; therefore, objects and people are not removed, but instead children are led through a problem-solving process. Teachers encourage children to take turns expressing their feeling and needs and all involved parties will suggest solutions to the problem. Teachers acknowledge children's feeling and needs and work hard to make sure everyone is heard and a fair solution is found;

- teachers connect regularly with parents to check in with how their child is doing and to gain a better understanding of how to support a child who is experiencing frequent challenges.

We **DO NOT** allow:

- teachers using harsh voices, yelling, or shaming
- teachers threatening or punishing
- grabbing, shaking, hitting, spanking or physically harming a child in any way by any adult on school property.

Children thrive on having choices and responsibilities. They are amazing problem solvers when given the opportunity.

NAP POLICY

For children who need a nap, we provide a quiet space and a cozy mat. Please bring any special nap materials your child may need (i.e., blanket, pillow, stuffy).

OPEN DOOR POLICY

It is our deepest wish that you as parents, guardians, relatives, and family friends feel that this school is your community too. At anytime you are welcome to stop by and visit. Feel free to have a seat, lend a hand, or just play. Please give us a call at anytime to see how your child is doing. We want to contribute to your sense of safety and comfort.

LICENSED

We are a licensed child-care facility with the City of Moscow and all of our employees are licensed child-care workers who have received training in early childhood development. They are also current in Pediatric CPR and First Aid, and have passed Local and Federal Criminal Background Checks.

CELEBRATIONS

We deeply value the personal growth of each student and make an effort at every turn to bring attention to and celebrate their growth and development. We celebrate birthdays, children joining or leaving our school, and the children's accomplishments (for example, toilet-learning, name-writing, academic growth, social and conflict resolution skills, etc.). As a Reggio Emilia program, we emphasize building awareness among our students of our classroom community, as well as our broader community and other cultures around the world. We believe a more peaceful community results from inclusiveness, tolerance, and awareness of the richness of our social fabric. While we do explore celebrations from other cultures in our classroom, we make an effort to be inclusive to all families by not overtly celebrating religious holidays with organized parties (e.g., Christmas, Easter, etc.). If you have a talent, passion or special family tradition that you would like to share, please let us know. We love having parents bring in things from other cultures to share with our students.

CALENDAR (School Year 2021-22)

September 1st	First Day for Students
September 6th	No School – Labor Day
October 7th	No School – Professional Development
November 4th-5th	No School – Professional Development
November 22nd-26th	No School – Thanksgiving Vacation
December 20th-31st	No School – Winter Vacation
January 3rd	First Day Back after Break
January 17th	No School – Martin Luther King, Jr./Idaho Human Rights Day
January 28th	No School – Professional Development
January 31st	No School – Professional Development
February 14th	No School – Presidents’ Day
March 14-18th	No School – Spring Vacation
April 8th	No School – Professional Development
May 30th	No School – Memorial Day
June 8th	Last Day for Students

Summer Schedule (TBA)

WHAT TO BRING TO SCHOOL

Before the First Day

- A completed GMCS Registration Form with fee and Supply fee.
- A completed GMCS Information Form.
- A completed GMCS Permissions Form
- Labeled pull ups or diapers and wipes if needed
- Extra spare set of clothing (underwear, socks, shirt, pants, dress).
- Sunscreen.

On the First Day

- A copy of current immunizations.
- First month's tuition.
- A lunch in a lunch box (with food not needing refrigeration or heating).
 - Please send healthy food choices and limit sweets to one item per day. Sweets include: gummy fruit snacks, cookies, jello, pudding, granola bars (unless high in protein), cookie bars, fruit roll-ups, sugary cereal. No candy please.
 - Please pack food in containers that your child can open and close on their own. Being independent during meal time is one of our goals and we want to limit the spread of germs.
- A leak-proof water bottle.

What to Wear

- Please send your child in clothing that can get dirty. We offer messy art, science, and hands-on activities. We use washable paint, but it doesn't always wash completely out.
- Make sure the clothes your child wears are easy for them to pull up and down when using the bathroom. We encourage independence. Please avoid sending younger children in overalls, tight clothing, or clothing with snaps can be difficult to manipulate. Children who wear pull ups or diapers will be assisted in changing while standing up. They will be encouraged to pull their own pants down and up, and be included in the process of becoming independent with toileting.

Items From Home

- Comfort items like stuffed animals or special toys can come to school but we request that they stay in your child's back-pack so that they do not get lost, broken or fought over. They may be visited whenever needed.

The Reggio Emilia Approach to Education

“Once children develop certain skills and concepts such as empathy or critical thinking, that’s something that no one can take away.”

Katherine Hobson, *The New York Times*, April 15, 2020, “What are Reggio Emilia Schools?”

REGGIO’S FOUR MAIN COMPONENTS

- **Emergent Curriculum.** This means essentially that the curriculum for the classroom is a mashup of the children’s interests, their families’ communication, and the close observation and notes teachers take on their students’ growth and exploration. Every child is an active participant in the learning process and is a valued member of our community. Since children make meaning through everyday experiences and hands-on exploration, curriculum topics are derived from talking with children and their families, as well as from things that are known to be interesting to children (dinosaurs, art, languages, science experiments, and so on). This allows them to test theories and make connections with their everyday environments. Teachers partner with children and the exchange of theories are referred to as the Cycle of Inquiry. Teachers use their interpretations, intentions, and goals (social, emotional, and academic) to make choices that they share with children. Learning is seen not as a linear process but as a spiraling progression.
- **In-Depth Projects.** In Reggio Emilia, the learning is led by each child, and structured around projects. Teachers often call these projects “adventures” and these might last a week or two - or extend the entire school year. These projects are thorough studies of concepts and ideas based on the information gathered about children’s interests. Teachers will help guide the children in choosing an area of research and following it to the project’s conclusion. Thus, teachers act as advisors on these projects, helping children decide in which direction they would like to take their research, how they can represent what they learn, and what materials would be best suited for their representations. What sets Reggio Emilia apart is its emphasis on student-led projects. When students show interest in a topic, teachers create projects to encourage that interest. They keep documentation in a portfolio for each child throughout the year, allowing them to track individual development. Projects provide the backbone of the children’s and teachers’ learning experiences. They are based on the strong convictions that learning by doing and discussing in group and to revisit ideas and experiences is the premier way of learning.
- **Representational Development.** This principal takes into account Howard Gardner’s concept of multiple intelligences. The Reggio Emilia approach invites children to present their ideas and learning in many forms: print, art, drama, dance, music, puppetry, and so on. A child may be more drawn to dancing to tell their stories than drawing, for example, and there is room in a Reggio approach to be excited about that and help them translate that strength into new areas. Children can demonstrate their ideas in many different

ways: dance, paint, wire, clay, pencil, nature materials...other than just number and letter. Giving the space for all of these efforts to flourish helps each child build confidence and excitement about their learning.

- **Collaboration.** The idea of collaboration is seen as necessary to further a child's cognitive development. In a Reggio-inspired classroom, teachers encourage groups to work together using dialogue, comparisons, negotiations and respect. Groups both large and small are encouraged to work together to problem-solve using dialogue, comparisons, negotiations, and other important interpersonal skills. Each child's voice is heard in order to promote a balance between a sense of belonging to the group and a sense of self. In this collaborative environment, children negotiate with teachers on which interests will be studied, which allows them to feel heard and respected, and encourages their sense of self-worth.

The Role of the Environment

The classroom is referred to as the "third teacher" in Reggio schools. Much like the Montessori approach, great care is taken to construct an environment that allows for the easy exploration of various interests. The documentation mentioned above is kept at children's eye level so that they, too, can see how they are progressing over the year. Items from home, such as real dishware, tablecloths, plants, and animals, contribute to a comforting, "homey" classroom environment. Teachers intentionally organize, support and plan for various spaces for children. The daily schedules are planned to ensure that there is a balance between individual, large and small group activities, child directed and teacher-initiated activity and inside as well as outside experiences. No matter what resources Reggio-inspired teachers have to work with, they consider every element of the space thoughtfully to create an atmosphere where children can feel a sense of agency, creativity, and belonging. Organic play in the classroom also leads to communication that fosters new ideas while supporting social and emotional growth.

The Role of the Teacher

Teachers play a dual role in the Reggio Emilia classroom. Their primary role is to learn alongside children, becoming involved in group learning experiences as a guide and resource. Teachers are fully hands-on and wholly present alongside children. A Reggio Emilia teacher carefully observe and track the growth of children and the classroom community. They will also take time to reflect on what they have learned about themselves and their teaching.

The Role of the Students

- **Co-constructors:** partners, guides, nurtures, solves problems, learns, hypothesizes;
- **Researchers:** learns, observes, revisits;
- **Documenters:** listens, records, displays, revisits;
- **Advocates for children:** involved in the community, politics relating to children, speaks for children and presents their work to other educators and community members.

Image of the Child

Children are viewed as competent, powerful, full of knowledge, and interested in connecting to the world around them.

The Role of Parents

Parents are important and valued partners in the learning process. They are a child's "first teacher" and an active part of their children's learning experiences.

The Hundred Languages of Children.

The term "hundred languages of children" refers to the many ways that children have of expressing themselves using art, language, physicality, experimentation, relationships and many other avenues as forms of communication and expression. Reggio teachers provide children with different avenues for thinking, revising, constructing, negotiating, developing and symbolically expressing their thoughts and feelings. Children are viewed as competent, curious, full of knowledge and potential, and interested in connecting to the world around them. As children proceed in an investigation, generating and testing their hypotheses, they are encouraged to depict their understanding through one of many symbolic languages, including drawing, sculpture, dramatic play, and writing. Teachers foster children's involvement in the processes of exploration and evaluation, acknowledging the importance of their evolving products as vehicles for exchange. In the classroom, the Art Studio is an intentional space containing materials and tools to pursue thinking and concepts. What is done with the materials is not art per se, because in the view of Reggio educators the children's use of media is not a separate part of the curriculum but an integral part of the whole cognitive symbolic expression process of learning.

No Way. The Hundred Is There

Loris Malaguzzi (translated by Lella Gandini)

The child
is made of one hundred.
The child has
a hundred languages
a hundred hands
a hundred thoughts
a hundred ways of thinking
of playing, of speaking.
A hundred always a hundred
ways of listening
of marveling of loving
a hundred joys
for singing and understanding
a hundred worlds
to discover
a hundred worlds

to invent
a hundred worlds
to dream.
The child has
a hundred languages
(and a hundred, hundred, hundred more)
but they steal ninety-nine.

The school and the culture
separate the head from the body.

They tell the child:
to think without hands
to do without head
to listen and not to speak
to understand without joy
to love and to marvel
only at Easter and Christmas.

They tell the child:
to discover the world already there
and of the hundred
they steal ninety-nine.

They tell the child:
that work and play
reality and fantasy
science and imagination
sky and earth
reason and dream
are things

that do not belong together.

And thus they tell the child
that the hundred is not there.

The child says:
No way. The hundred is there.

History of Reggio Emilia Schools and Loris Malaguzzi -

Loris Malaguzzi was very well respected throughout the world and revered by his colleagues. Throughout his lifetime, he earned multiple awards, but his legacy is so much more than the awards he earned. Loris Malaguzzi was the driving force behind all key-points of the Reggio Emilia approach. Without his tireless efforts, it is unlikely that the Reggio Approach would exist as we understand it now. After all, it was developed through his own trials and errors. As he promised to the mothers who asked him to teach their children when he first rode his bicycle

up to their school, “I’ll learn as we go along, and the children will learn everything I learn working with them.” Seventy years later, we are still learning as we go, and the children are learning along with us. After all, it’s the curiosity of children that encourage their love of learning.

What grew to be one of the most influential educational philosophies throughout the world started with very humble beginnings in the northern region of Italy, in a town called Villa Cella, a borough of Reggio Emilia. Five days after the war ended, rumors began to circulate of a group of women who had decided to build a school from the rubble left after the Germans retreated from Italy. The group of women sold an abandoned German tank, nine horses, and two military trucks and began to construct a school within the countryside with the intent to ensure the next generation of children would grow up intolerant to injustice or inequality. Having heard the rumors, Malaguzzi’s interest was piqued, and he rode his bike to the town to see what the rumors were about. After seeing and speaking to the mothers involved, Malaguzzi was so impressed that he stayed in Reggio to assist. In Malaguzzi’s words, “It was the women’s first victory after the war because the decision was theirs. The men might have used the money differently.”

This first school still exists just 20 minutes outside the city of Reggio Emilia, and it became a labor of love for all involved. In the beginning, parents would contribute whatever they could to ensure the school could survive and continue running. Over the course of the next 15 years, the philosophy behind the Reggio Emilia approach began to flourish with several new schools opening, though all struggled to survive; however, by responding to popular demand, the city of Reggio Emilia established the first municipal preschools in 1963, securing the future of Reggio Emilia in doing so. As the first municipal schools were established, Malaguzzi took up the position of director, and he continued to develop the network of community-oriented nursery schools established in post-war Italy. By 1967, most preschools were folded into this network, which then expanded again in 1971 to include the first infant-toddler centers. Working alongside many other educators, Malaguzzi remained in his position as director until his retirement in 1985, though he remained heavily involved even in retirement.