

Community Stewardship Program

As founders of Golden Oak Montessori, we believe that school is a place to teach children about how to be better members of their community. We see school as not only a place to teach about community, but as an ideal place to *create* community.

The values of community stewardship will be taught in the integrated curriculum and lived in the daily experience of Golden Oak.

In elementary and middle school, we learn who we are and start to imagine how we will contribute to the world around us while also developing our skills at engaging with friends and neighbors. Being part of a community comes with important responsibilities and challenges—essential lessons not traditionally taught. Montessori recognizes that working towards common goals build character.

We think Golden Oak can be a “community center” by offering a place for students and parents to come together for activities that celebrate our diversity, improve wellness and health, and show how to tread lightly on the environment while improving quality of life.

Ecological stewardship is an integral part of Montessori’s elementary curriculum. The “Cosmic Education” curriculum Maria Montessori developed in the 1940’s for elementary education relates the fields of science, social studies, and history to the environmental impact of cultural movements, scientific discovery, and technological advancement.

We envision that Golden Oak Montessori, and its students as its ambassadors and innovators, will demonstrate how our cultures, our technological ingenuity, and innovation can improve our lives and community without causing harm to the environment.

To this end, we have designed a community stewardship program that encompasses every aspect of the school, such as planning a student-run organic garden, making ecologically aware light bulb choices, integrating a health and nutrition curriculum, and planning an annual Environmental Sciences Fair to include other local schools in our vision.

Through our school’s curriculum, facilities, and services to students and the community, we will strive to teach the values and practical solutions for environmental stewardship.

On every level, Golden Oak plans to keep our students and community healthy—a truly healthy outlook.

Golden Oak’s Community Stewardship Program

The Golden Oak curriculum will build on three pillars of community stewardship:

- **a cultural enrichment program,**
- **environmental education, and**
- **health education.**

In our Hayward community, these three elements are especially critical for educating our children for three related reasons. First, we live in a community—and world—with tremendous diversity where cultural pressures and conflicts abound. Golden Oak will reach out to our diverse community and nurture cultural education (see our information on “Montessori Success in the Minority Community”).

Showing children to value diversity and its lessons is key to building relationships and cultural understanding that will last a lifetime.

Second, Hayward is situated in a rapidly growing urban area which borders on some of the precious open space in the Bay Area. As a result, we face environmental challenges such as a diminishing water supply, developing alternative energy sources, and balancing urban development with habitat conservation. Local partners can help Golden Oak develop an ecologically conscious campus as well as further students’ exposure to local issues, such as through HARD trail-building or Sulfur Creek habitat efforts.

These are challenges that students—who are the next generation of environmental stewards—can tackle on a micro level while developing a greater appreciation for global environmental concerns.

Third, we are facing an epidemic of ever-rising rates of childhood obesity with serious health consequences for children. Tackling this issue must take place consistently, start early, and, importantly, involve parents and the larger community. Golden Oak Montessori plans to partner with an experienced health education program such as Kaiser Permanente’s Community Benefits Program and with local organizations, such as athletic teams, local chefs (yes, cooking classes!), and farmers markets to develop an innovative health curriculum.

Golden Oak Montessori plans to incorporate health, nutrition, and active lifestyle education—and modeling of healthy habits—into every aspect of the school.

Building a Curriculum for Community Stewardship:

The Cultural Enrichment Program

- Recognizing ethnic festivals and celebrations, and studying the historical context
- Integrating regional and local history of Indigenous and Mexican Californians
- Bilingual and bicultural Summer reading list (for example, Gabriel Garcia Marquez short stories; Sandra Cisneros novels; Pablo Neruda poetry)
- Hosting culturally relevant events, such as the Ballet Folklorico

Environmental Education

- Integrated curriculum projects with ecological focus, using demonstration elements available at school, such as solar power (how solar power works)
- Students collect data on and do projects on environmental performance metrics, such as energy use, water use, carbon footprint, waste etc.
- Students learn about the interconnection of local actions with regional and global environment – field trips to San Francisco Bay to see where school sewage and runoff goes, etc
- Student Environmental Docent Program for tours of the school
- Hands-on organic gardening program, parents welcome to come together to help in after-school gardening activities
- After-school and Summer programs with ecological focus
 - Outdoorsmanship and Survival camp
 - Gardening camp and Cooking camp
 - Habitat Restoration field projects (invasive plant removal)
 - Sulfur Creek Animal rescue
- Annual Environmental Science Fair (Eco-themed science projects, including poster presentations on data collected from the school on energy efficiency, native plants and habitat restoration)

Health and Nutrition Education

- Nutrition curriculum integrated with sciences
- Modeling of healthy lunches and snacks
- Newsletters with quarterly nutrition (including sample menus and recipes) and health column written by school experts, such as parent nutritionists

- or physicians
- Annual Family Cook-Off social event with prizes for healthful dishes
- Active outdoor play time with an outdoor space designed for building physical skills, such as balance, cardiovascular strength, large muscle coordination, and hand-eye coordination
- Specialized after-school offerings with emphasis on healthy activities, such as dance or karate.
- Organic garden where students practice healthy eating, from seed to table

Building a school that reflects our values

Community Outreach

- Educational opportunities for community (Local/Seasonal/organic buying)
- Seminar series from environmental leaders open to teachers, parents, students, and the public
- Good Stewardship Tours of school led by student docents
- Annual open-house event to showcase Stewardship Initiatives
- Annual sustainability demonstration fair (organized by students, for other schools)
- Farmers Market at school grounds (rental opportunity)

Ideal School Services

- Seasonal/local/organic school lunches to greatest extent possible
- Low-emissions school buses (i.e. Hybrid, electric, natural gas)
- Public Transportation accessibility
- Bicycle paths to school
- Procurement aspires to zero waste (e.g. use compostable potato starch utensils instead of plastic, reduce packaging, reuse and recycle paper)
- Composting on site, for garden use

Facilities - A Carbon Neutral School

- Pursue LEED certification by US Green Building Council
- Environmentally intelligent design for building, maximizing day-lighting, passive heating, and energy efficiency (e.g. high efficiency lighting, appliances, windows and insulation). This will lower our energy bills.
- Solar paneling—donated by solar company sponsor
- Recycled, reused, and non-toxic materials (i.e. low-volatile organic content paints, natural fiber carpeting, etc) to ensure healthy indoor air quality
- Organic garden
- Maintaining greenspace on grounds (native plants, maximize porous surfaces for runoff absorption, e.g. gravel or tiled parking lot)
- Rooftop rainwater capture for irrigation