



Community Handbook 2025-2026

Philosophy & Pedagogy

VISION

Our vision is to create a dynamic and inclusive learning community where every child is inspired to discover their passion for learning through engaging, real-world projects with purpose. We envision a place where academic excellence is intertwined with practical life skills, fostering well-rounded individuals who are prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

We aspire to be a hub of collaboration and service, where students, educators, families, and local organizations work together to create meaningful learning experiences. By providing opportunities for volunteerism and community engagement, we aim to instill a sense of responsibility and empathy in our students, empowering them to make a positive impact on their communities and beyond.

In our learning community, every child will be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to thrive in an ever-changing world, carrying with them a lifelong love of learning and a commitment to contributing to the greater good.

MISSION

At Harmony, we are dedicated to igniting the joy of learning through engaging, purposeful projects. Our mission is to cultivate a vibrant educational environment where children immerse themselves in meaningful activities that integrate math, science, English Language Arts (ELA), Spanish Language Arts (SLA), history, and practical life skills. We strive to inspire curiosity, critical thinking, and a lifelong love of learning by connecting academic concepts to real-world applications.

We believe in the power of community and the importance of giving back. Our learning community actively collaborates with local organizations, providing students with volunteer opportunities that enrich their educational experience and foster a sense of civic responsibility. By engaging with the local community, our students develop empathy, social awareness, and a deeper understanding of their role in society.

Our students will not only gain knowledge but also develop the skills and confidence necessary to navigate and contribute to the world around them. Through hands-on experiences, collaborative projects, and community involvement, we aim to empower each child to reach their full potential and carry the lessons they learn with them throughout their lives.

METHODS

Our approach to education is innovative and student-centered, focusing on fostering a love of learning through engaging, meaningful, and practical experiences. We believe in breaking away from traditional educational models to create a more holistic and adaptable learning environment. The following methods outline our unique approach:

- **No-Homework Policy:**
 - **In-Class Mastery:** We prioritize understanding and mastering concepts during class time, ensuring that students receive immediate support and feedback from teachers.
 - **Work-Life Balance:** By eliminating homework, we allow students to enjoy their time outside of school, engage in extracurricular activities, and spend quality time with their families.
 - **Focused Learning:** Class time is used efficiently for active learning, discussions, and hands-on projects, reducing the need for repetitive homework tasks.
- **Cross-Curricular Learning:**
 - **Integrated Subjects:** We design lessons and projects that blend multiple subjects, helping students make connections between different areas of knowledge and understand the real-world relevance of what they learn.
 - **Thematic Units:** Themes and big ideas are used to tie together various disciplines, such as combining math, science, and history in a project about ancient civilizations.
 - **Holistic Understanding:** Promoting critical thinking and creativity, students will be able to see the interconnectedness of knowledge and apply it in diverse contexts.
- **Learning through the Levels:**
 - **Personalized Progression:** Students advance based on their mastery of skills and concepts rather than age or grade level, allowing for a more personalized learning experience.
 - **Flexible Grouping:** Students are grouped according to their current level of understanding in different subjects, enabling targeted instruction and support.
 - **Continuous Growth:** This method ensures that each student is challenged and can progress at their own pace, fostering a growth mindset and a love for continuous learning.
- **Project-Based Learning:**
 - **Real-World Projects:** Students engage in projects that address real-world problems and questions, making learning relevant and purposeful.
 - **Collaborative Learning:** PBL encourages teamwork and collaboration, as students work together to plan, research, and complete projects.
 - **Skill Development:** Through PBL, students develop a wide range of skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and creativity.
 - **Reflective Practice:** Students reflect on their learning process and outcomes gaining insights into their strengths and areas for improvements.
- **Hands-On Experiential Learning:**

- **Active Participation:** We emphasize hands-on activities and experiments, allowing students to learn by doing and experiencing concepts firsthand.
- **Field Trips and Community Involvement:** Learning extends beyond the classroom with field trips, volunteer opportunities in the community, and workshops that provide real-world context and practical application.
- **Permaculture and Regenerative Agriculture:** In science, students engage in hands-on projects that involve designing and maintaining sustainable agricultural systems, reinforcing ecological and environmental principles.

These methods ensure that our students receive a well-rounded, engaging, and effective education. By focusing on no-homework policies, cross-curricular learning, learning through the levels, and project-based learning, we prepare our students not only for academic success, but also for meaningful and fulfilling lives.

CURRICULUM

Our curriculum is designed to foster creativity and flexibility, providing students with a comprehensive and engaging educational experience that integrates core academic subjects with practical life skills and cultural awareness. We emphasize hands-on learning, critical thinking, and real-world applications to ensure students are well-prepared for future success. The following is an overview of our curriculum by subject area:

- **Math:**
 - **Problem-Solving:** Encourage innovative approaches to solving mathematical problems through real-life scenarios and projects.
 - **Critical Thinking:** Develop analytical skills by exploring complex mathematical concepts and their practical applications.
 - **Flexibility:** Adapt math lessons to cater to different learning styles and paces, incorporating technology and manipulatives.
- **Science:**
 - **Permaculture and Regenerative Agriculture:**
 - **Sustainable Practices:** Teach principles of permaculture, emphasizing sustainable living and ecological balance.
 - **Hands-On Learning:** Engage students in designing and maintaining gardens and agricultural systems that mimic natural ecosystems.
 - **Ecological Impact:** Explore the benefits of regenerative agriculture, focusing on soil health, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration.
 - **Inquiry-Based Learning:** Foster a sense of curiosity and discovery through hands-on experiments and investigations.
 - **Interdisciplinary Projects:** Integrate science with other subjects, such as technology and engineering, to create comprehensive learning experiences.
 - **Environmental Awareness:** Emphasize sustainability and environmental science, focusing on local ecosystems and global issues.
- **History:**
 - **Historical Thinking Skills:** Promote critical analysis of historical events, sources, and perspectives.

- **Project-Based Learning:** Engage students in projects that explore significant historical periods and their impact on the present.
- **Cultural Context:** Highlight the history and culture of Costa Rica, including pre-Columbian civilizations, colonial history, and contemporary developments.
- **English Language Arts (ELA):**
 - **Literature and Composition:** Encourage creative expression through diverse literary genres and writing assignments.
 - **Communication Skills:** Develop effective oral and written communication skills through presentations, debates, and collaborative projects.
 - **Critical Reading:** Foster analytical reading skills by examining a wide range of texts, from classic literature to modern media.
- **Spanish Language Arts (SLA):**
 - **Language Proficiency:** Enhance reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in Spanish through immersive activities and practice.
 - **Cultural Appreciation:** Explore the rich literary and cultural heritage of the Spanish-speaking world, with a focus on Costa Rican authors and traditions.
 - **Bilingual Integration:** Support bilingualism and biliteracy, encouraging students to seamlessly navigate between English and Spanish.
- **Culture of Costa Rica:**
 - **Cultural Heritage:** Study Costa Rican customs, traditions, and festivals to deepen students' understanding and appreciation of local culture.
 - **Geography and Biodiversity:** Explore Costa Rica's diverse landscapes and unique biodiversity, emphasizing conservation efforts and ecological significance.
 - **Community Engagement:** Partner with local organizations and communities to provide students with authentic cultural experiences and volunteer opportunities.
- **Afternoon workshops:** Art, Music, STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, math), World Studies, Costa Rican Studies, Cooking, Projects.

Our curriculum is designed to be dynamic and adaptable, ensuring that each student's educational journey is personalized and meaningful. By integrating creativity, flexibility, and community involvement, we aim to cultivate lifelong learners who are well-equipped to make a positive impact on the world.

Grading: Blueprint Designs

Students will create a comprehensive blueprint design at the end of the 4th quarter. These blueprints will serve as the primary assessment tool and will include the following components:

1. **Materials List**
 - Detailed list of all materials used in the project.
 - Quantities and specifications.
2. **Integrated Learning Documentation**
 - **Math:** Calculations, measurements, and any mathematical concepts applied.
 - **Science:** Scientific principles, experiments, and observations relevant to the project.

- **History:** Historical context, significance, and connections made during the project.
 - **ELA (English Language Arts):** Written reflections, reports, or narratives related to the project.
 - **SLA (Second Language Acquisition):** Any use of a second language in research, communication, or documentation.
3. **Project Overview**
 - Brief description of the project goals and objectives.
 - Explanation of how the project integrates various subjects and real-world applications.
 4. **Reflection and Self-Assessment**
 - Student reflections on what they learned, challenges faced, and how they overcame them.
 - Self-assessment on their contributions and understanding of the project.
 5. **Community Involvement**
 - Description of any community involvement or collaboration.
 - Impact of the project on the community or environment.

This format ensures that each project is thoroughly documented and assessed holistically, emphasizing the practical application of interdisciplinary learning.

Schedules & Holidays

ACADEMIC YEAR: AUGUST - JUNE

VACATIONS: OCT (2 weeks); DEC/JAN (3 weeks); APR (2 weeks); JUN/JUL/AUG (6 weeks)

HOURS OF OPERATION: 8AM - 3PM

DAILY RHYTHM FOR AGES 6-15

- 8:00 AM - 8:30 AM | DROP OFF
- 8:30 AM - 9:15 AM | NATURE & ANIMAL CARE
- 9:15-10:00 AM | ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS
- 9:30 AM - 10:00 AM | SNACK & FREE PLAY
- 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM | MATHEMATICS
- 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM | SPANISH LANGUAGE ARTS
- 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM | LUNCH & FREE PLAY
- 1:00 PM - 1:45 PM | WORKSHOP
- 1:45 PM - 2:30 PM | WORKSHOP
- 2:30 PM - 3:00 PM | END-OF-DAY WRAP UP
- 3:00-3:30 PM | PICKUP

DAILY RHYTHM FOR AGES 3-5

- 8:00 AM - 8:30 AM | DROP OFF
- 8:30 AM - 9:15 AM | NATURE & ANIMAL CARE
- 9:15-10:00 AM | GROUP ACTIVITIES
- 10:00 AM - 10:30 AM | SNACK & FREE PLAY
- 10:30 AM - 11:15 AM | STORY TIME & FREE CHOICE PLAY
- 11:15 AM - 11:45 AM | MOVEMENT & GAMES
- 11:45 AM - 12:00 PM | CLEANUP
- 12:00-12:15 PM | PICKUP

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

We open at **8:00 am**, classes begin at **8:30am**, and the day ends at **3pm**. Pickup time is 3:00-3:30 pm. In order to uphold a healthy and productive educational atmosphere and routine, it is essential for all students to arrive and depart on time.

HOLIDAYS AND CLOSURES

All holidays and closures can be found on our Calendar. We will be closed on all legal holidays that align with Costa Rican law and the national calendar.

August 15: Mother's Day

September 15: Independence Day

October 4-19: Midterm Holidays

December 1: Abolition of the Army Day

December 13 - January 4: Mid year Holidays

March 28 - April 12: Midterm Holidays

May 1: Worker's Day

General Policies & Procedures

SNACKS & LUNCHES

A healthy snack and lunch will provide your kids with the energy and focus they need to learn and excel each day.

- Aside from having a nutritious breakfast, children must also be provided with a sufficient amount of food for each day, covering both snacks and lunch.
- Students are expected to bring whole, fresh, and minimally-processed foods, rather than highly-processed packaged foods, in order to uphold our healthy habits; "junk" foods are not allowed at Harmony.
- In order to reduce single-use plastic waste, all snacks and lunches must be brought in reusable containers.
- In order to operate efficiently, all bottles and food containers must be labeled with the student's name.

Lunch service is available if desired (cooked in home by Lauren). We prepare meals that are gluten & dairy free, and use minimally processed ingredients.

FOOD ALLERGIES

All parents are required to inform us of any student allergies, as well as specific emergency actions to be taken. All known student allergies will be posted in the kitchen and staff will be informed of allergies and necessary emergency protocols.

WHEN A STUDENT BECOMES SICK

Students showing significant signs of sickness, contagious conditions (skin rashes, fever, etc.), or an inability to participate in a normal day routine are not allowed to attend until recovered.

During regular hours, if a student becomes significantly ill or unwell to a concerning degree, the parent(s) will be contacted and required to come for their child(ren) within one hour. If parents are either unreachable or unable to arrive within a timely manner, the emergency contact will be contacted.

REASONS TO KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME

- A fever of 38°C or higher
- Diarrhea for more than four hours.
- Vomiting two or more times within a 24 hour period.
- Breathing complications, sore throat, swollen glands, loss of voice, hacking, or continuous coughing.
- Frequent scratching of the scalp (lice) or body (rash); any noticeable skin infections that are fresh.
- Behavioral issues that complicate the safety or well-being of other children.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

1. Life-Threatening Emergencies

- A)** One staff member tends to injured/ill child.
- B)** One staff member contacts local emergency responders.
- C)** One staff member contacts parent(s).

2. Minor Emergencies

- A)** One staff member tends to the child(ren).
- B)** One staff member contacts parent(s).

***If parents are unreachable, the emergency contact will be contacted. If both parents and emergency contacts are unavailable during time-sensitive emergencies, teachers at Harmony will take appropriate action for the safety and well-being of the child.**

INJURY POLICY (NON-EMERGENCY)

For non-emergency injuries, children will be cared for and parents will be informed as soon as possible.

PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Parents and teachers are expected to establish close relationships with each other and are encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings regarding all matters relevant to their child(ren). All communication between parents and teachers must be respectful and productive and, during operating hours, parent-teacher discussions must be considerate of students and the schedule; parents and teachers must never engage in discussions that distract their attention from the students and prevent them from being aware and responsible for student engagement and safety. For all discussions that require the full attention of a teacher, the available options for parents are to plan a meeting either before or after hours.

Enrollment & Financial Terms

ENROLLMENT PROCESS

To finalize enrollment, the enrollment process must be completed; to complete the enrollment process, an enrollment form must be completed for each child; before an enrollment form can be completed for each child, all provided enrollment material must be fully reviewed and understood; and upon completion of the enrollment form, the yearly enrollment deposit must be paid for each enrolled child.

The 2025-2026 yearly enrollment fee is \$350 USD for each enrolled child for both age groups. This covers all materials and supplies.

TUITION

Tuition for full-year enrollment is due before the first day of each month, from August to June, and all months must be paid; tuition for partial-year enrollment is for the total agreed upon term length and must be fully paid. The 2025-2026 monthly tuition fee is \$500 USD for each enrolled child in the age 6-15 group; the total cost for the full year of tuition is \$5500 USD.

Monthly tuition for the children in the half day program for ages 3-5 is \$350 USD; the total cost for the full year is \$3850 USD.

- **IMPORTANT:** Enrollment, whether full-year or partial-year, requires all months within the agreed upon term length to be fully paid, unless the student is properly unenrolled before the completion of their enrollment term. During the enrollment term, absences due to personal days, sickness, traveling, or unforeseen events are not deductible from the agreed upon monthly tuition amount.
- **IMPORTANT:** If tuition cannot be paid before the first day of the month, a notice of late payment must be given at least one week prior, along with an agreed upon date of payment; if a notice is not received one week prior and the tuition payment is not received by the due date, an initial late fee of \$50 will be applied, followed by an additional \$5 per day. If tuition is past due for one month or more, families must provide a valid reason and propose a payment plan to be agreed upon; if a payment plan is unable to be agreed upon, enrollment may be suspended. **We understand families may experience unforeseen financial difficulties at times, which is why we encourage families to avoid late fees with clear and direct communication.**

PAYMENT METHODS

- **Cash:** Cash payments are the preferred method of payment. Please enclose in an envelope or any type of paper and labeled with student name(s), payment type (month of tuition, enrollment fees, past due fees, special expenses, etc.), payment amount, and date.
- **PayPal (USA):** Account email **gingerpianist@gmail.com**
 - For PayPal deposits, all international transfer fees must be included in the total deposited amount, as well as an additional fee of \$15 per \$400 deposit amount (example: \$15 for \$1-\$400, \$30 for \$401-\$800, \$45 or \$801-\$1200, etc.)
- **IMPORTANT:** All deposits must be completed with a deposit note containing the name of student(s) and specific payment details (enrollment fee, tuition month, additional expenses, etc.), and the deposit receipt must be received to confirm payment.
- **Venmo:** @gingerpianist
- **Zelle:** +1-817-559-5424
- **WISE:** @laurennicholej1
- **BAC Costa Rican Bank** - Lauren Nichole Johnson (USD): CR 1501 0200 0096 3043 6411
- **BAC Costa Rican Bank** - Lauren Nichole Johnson (CRC): CR 8101 0200 0096 3043 6581
- If official receipts are needed, an additional 10% tax will be added to each payment.

Student Expectations

1. Students who join us are required to uphold all behavioral expectations.

a. All expectations align to these four core principles:

- i. Familial and communal reciprocity
- ii. Individual and collective well-being
- iii. Personal and social accountability and responsibility
- iv. Holistic mindfulness of environment and sustainable behaviors.

Our behavioral expectations are intended to cultivate and maintain an uplifting, harmonious, and productive environment for all, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the relationships our children have with themselves and others, redesigning their idea of education, and guiding them to find their highest sense of self-direction, mastery, and purpose, as prosocial members of our globally-connected society.

1. RESPECT

- a. We uplift each other, in all situations, as one unified family.
- b. We listen intently to others and care to understand them.
- c. We are patient with our words and actions, avoiding interruptions and inconsiderate behaviors. We behave with respect to the environment, such as using inside voices and appropriate language.
- d. We ask before using items that are not ours, in order to show we care for the belongings of others.

- e. We are organized with our belongings, fully clean the messes we make, and help to maintain the overall order of our environment, both inside and outside.

2. ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

- a. We always take responsibility for our words and actions; we never attempt to deny or make excuses.
- b. We see problems and mistakes as tools for growth. If we are ever unkind or make mistakes that harm others or our environment, we accept our mistakes, attempt to correct them with restorative intent, and see the experience as a lesson to learn, with the understanding that our social and ecological relationships are more important than our personal pride.
- c. If conflict arises and we engage with unnecessarily harmful words and/or actions, we accept that “it takes two to tango”, “two wrongs don’t make a right”, and that we must also be accountable for our behaviors, even if the other(s) in question are wrong for their behaviors.

3. CLASS BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

- a. We arrive to class on time and prepared, both with a positive attitude and all necessary material.
- b. We focus on doing our personal best, as we are not in competition with each other.
- c. We are always a team, both as a class and a community, and work together, cooperatively and collaboratively.
- d. We promote a positive atmosphere with our words and actions, helping our peers feel safe and uplifted.
- e. We pay attention, participate, and ask questions.
- f. We follow instructions, unless confused or in disagreement; if either, we question and/or argue with positive intent.
- g. We embrace mistakes, accept not knowing, and always ask questions.
- h. We inform the teacher(s) before leaving the classroom or our class group, in order for the teacher(s) to be aware, accountable, and responsible.

4. HOLISTICALLY HEALTHY HABITS

- a. We make healthy and ecologically-respectful choices while at Harmony.
- b. We bring healthy foods (snacks and lunches) to Harmony.
- c. We do not bring gum, candy, or other non-nutritive “junk” foods; these treats can be enjoyed when students are not at Harmony.
- d. We bring our food and beverages in reusable containers, in order to reduce single-use plastic waste.

5. DAILY REQUIRED SUPPLIES

- a. Reusable water bottle & reusable food containers
- b. Swimwear and towel
- c. Change of clothes
- d. Shoes (whether worn or not)
- e. All necessary materials for class
 - i. General school supplies and materials are provided for students (Pencils, notebooks, art supplies, scissors, glue, etc.)

Thank you for joining us in Harmony!