

# **Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf**



## **Parent-Student Handbook**

**2015 - 2016**

# Welcome!

Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf is the fulfillment of a dream of Ms. Julie Rutenberg. She wanted to bring the Montessori method of teaching and learning to Deaf children in the Tampa Bay Area. As a former student of a Montessori program, Ms. Rutenberg saw the strong connection between the sensorial presentations used for instruction in a Montessori classroom, and the need for an interactive delivery of information in a classroom for Deaf children.

Ms. Rutenberg opened Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf in August, 2003. Results thus far have been impressive. Enrollment has grown steadily and children are getting the chance to grow and learn within a Montessori-based curriculum.

Blossom provides a unique setting in which the academic success of each student is the main focus. This can be accomplished because class size is small and communication is direct. In the classroom, each child is encouraged to use their preferred mode of communication. Teachers work one-on-one with students in order to meet individual needs.

As a Blossom family, you will become part of this amazing academic environment. Our families are precious to us and we appreciate everything you contribute to this wonderful learning experience. The teachers, staff, volunteers, and friends of Blossom welcome you to the most unique educational opportunity for children in the state of Florida.

Blossom's mission is **'Giving Parents a Choice and Children a Chance'** because we believe that together we can change the world...one child at a time.

*"Once I knew only darkness and stillness ... my life was without past or future ... but a little word from the fingers of another fell into my hand that clutched at emptiness, and my heart leaped to the rapture of living."*

*Helen Keller*

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<i>**Parent &amp; Student Signature is Required- please review the handbook, sign page 38 &amp; return signature page to keep on record in your child's student file.</i>	

# Meet the Staff:

## Administrative Staff:

Ms. Julie Rutenberg, Director / Founder  
[jrutenberg@blossomschool.org](mailto:jrutenberg@blossomschool.org)

Ms. Tara Bonano, Business Manger  
[tbonano@blossomschool.org](mailto:tbonano@blossomschool.org)

Ms. Lisa Wilson, Director of Development  
[lwilson@blossomschool.org](mailto:lwilson@blossomschool.org)

## Instructional Staff:

Ms. Colette Derks, Teacher 3-6 Classroom  
[cderks@blossomschool.org](mailto:cderks@blossomschool.org)

Mrs. Katelyn Vetter, Teacher 6 - 9 Classroom  
[kvetter@blossomschool.org](mailto:kvetter@blossomschool.org)

Mrs. Jamie Dejesus, Assistant 6 - 9 Classroom  
[jdejesus@blossomschool.org](mailto:jdejesus@blossomschool.org)

Mrs. Amanda Livesay, Teacher 9 - 12 Classroom  
[alivesay@blossomschool.org](mailto:alivesay@blossomschool.org)

Mrs. Elaine Hampton, Assistant 9 - 12 Classroom  
[ehampton@blossomschool.org](mailto:ehampton@blossomschool.org)

Mrs. Cam Van Noord, Teacher 12 - 15 Classroom  
[cvannoord@blossomschool.org](mailto:cvannoord@blossomschool.org)

Please feel free to contact our staff Monday-Friday between the hours of 7:30am-5:30pm via e-mail (see individual e-mail addresses above), telephone (727) 539-7879, or video phone (727) 222-4209. Please give staff 24-hours to reply to e-mails. If you need to talk with a staff member about your child or an important issue, please contact them in advance to schedule a meeting at a date and time that is convenient for all.

*"What a child doesn't receive, he can seldom later give."  
P.D. James*

## **Hours of Operation:**

**Blossom's hours of operation are 7:30a.m. to 5:30p.m. Monday through Friday.**

**The Before Care Program opens at 7:30a.m. Monday through Friday.**

The Before Care program is licensed, and therefore only available to students who are enrolled in the program. Students may not arrive earlier than 7:30a.m. - no exceptions. There is no drop in care.

**The academic day starts promptly at 8:30a.m. and concludes at 3:00p.m. Monday thru Friday.**

Students may arrive between 8:20a.m. - 8:30a.m. to make sure they are in their classroom before the academic day begins. Students may not arrive earlier than 8:20a.m. if they are not enrolled in Before Care - no exceptions due to licensing regulations. Students will be marked tardy if they arrive 8:31a.m. or later. Please be sure your child arrives to school each day on time.

Students will be dismissed from the academic day at 3:00p.m. Students who are not enrolled in the After Care Program will be immediately dismissed to their parent/guardian via Safety Patrol at 3:00p.m. Safety Patrol will escort your child to your vehicle in the front parking lot. Staff will monitor your child and Safety Patrol at all times.

**The After Care Program begins at 3:00 p.m. and is available until 5:30p.m. Monday through Friday.**

The After Care program is licensed, and therefore only available to students who are enrolled in the program. There is no drop in care. Students may not stay in After Care past 5:30p.m. as our building is officially closed after that time.

**Regularly scheduled extra-curricular programs are scheduled throughout the year. These activities will take place after the academic day has concluded.**

Blossom students will be involved with the Garden Club, and a variety of community events. Additional extracurricular opportunities will be made available throughout, as well as field trips within our local community.

*"Service to youth is the rent we pay for the space we occupy on earth."*

*Leo Bascaglia*

## Coming and Going:

**Blossom's front door will remain closed and locked at all times. The front door has a coded entry pad and only those with a code will be able to enter the building without staff assistance.** Parents/guardians and staff will be provided with this code at the beginning of the school year. For the safety of our students, this code is private. Please do NOT share this code with anyone, including your child(ren) who attend Blossom, their siblings who do not attend Blossom, your family or friends. Parents/Guardians are required to walk their child into the building each day. Students are not allowed to enter the building on their own at any time, and they are not allowed to open a door to allow anyone to enter, including Blossom parents/guardians and staff. All other visitors, family & friends must ring the door bell and a staff member will allow secured entry into the building. A staff member will ask visitors to provide proof of identity, sign into the Visitors Log on the front credenza and issue a Visitors Name Tag. All visitors MUST be escorted through the building by a staff member at all times.

**All students attending Blossom's Before Care Program should be walked into the building by a parent/guardian. Before Care will be held in the "Big Room" from 7:30a.m.-8:15a.m. Students in Before Care will begin transitioning into their assigned classroom between 8:15a.m. to 8:20a.m.** We do ask that parents/guardians of younger students in the 3-6 Class walk their child directly into the Before Care to make sure a staff member is aware that your child has arrived. This will prevent the younger children from walking around the building unattended. Younger students in the 3-6 Class, as well as students who are enrolled in the ELC School Readiness Program must be signed in to Before Care upon arrival. Sign in/out procedures for these groups are stated in the upcoming text.

**School age students attending Blossom's 6-9 Class, 9-12 Class & 12-15 Class who arrive for the Before Care Program (between 7:30a.m. and 8:20a.m. -or- on time to school (between 8:20a.m. and 8:30a.m.) must be walked into the building by a parent/guardian, but do not need to be signed in. A staff member will take daily attendance for all school age students. If a school age student arrives late (8:31a.m. or later), they must be walked into the building by a parent/guardian; however, we ask that you do not walk your child into the classroom as this may be disruption to the students who are working or the teacher who may be giving a lesson. A tardy note must be provided by a parent, doctor or dentist when a child arrives late.**

If student from the 3-6 Class arrives late (8:31a.m. or later), they must be walked to the door of your child's classroom; however, we ask that you do not walk your child into the classroom as this may be a disruption to the students who are

already working or the teacher who may be giving a lesson. A tardy note must be provided by a parent, doctor or dentist when a child arrives late.

**Students who are enrolled in the ELC School Readiness Program and/or VPK program are required to be signed in and out each day, upon arrival and departure.** If your child is enrolled in one or both of these programs, there will be an individual tab with your child's name on it located in the back of the Daily Attendance Log which is located on the rolling desk in the front lobby. A separate ELC and/or VPK Attendance Sheets will be provided in this section. The additional attendance sheet is required by ELC and VPK. Failure to sign these attendance sheets can result in loss of funding from ELC and/or VPK. If someone other than yourself is dropping off or picking up your child, please be sure they are aware of the sign in/out procedure.

**All Students will be dismissed from the Academic Day at 3:00p.m.. Students who are not enrolled in the After Care Program will be released to their parent/guardian via Safety Patrol.** Parents should arrive at the school no later than 3:00p.m. and stay seated in their vehicle. Parking is limited so please use only one parking space to park your vehicle. Safety Patrol will escort your child to your vehicle in the front parking lot. Staff will monitor your child and Safety Patrol at all times. If you are required to sign out your child from school each day, a staff member will bring the Daily Attendance Log to your vehicle for signature. For the safety of the students, please use caution when driving in and out of the parking lot (i.e. no speeding, look carefully before you back up your vehicle).

**Students will not be released to anyone who does not have prior documented clearance on file with the school.** Parents/Guardians may list two emergency contacts on your child's "Enrollment Form". Emergency contacts are individuals who are responsible for your child IF we are unable to reach a parent/guardian in the case of an emergency, and are also approved to pick up your child. You may also list additional family & friends to your child's "Approved Pick Up List" at any time. If you need to send someone to pick up your child who is NOT on your child's current Enrollment Form or Approved Pick Up List, a parent/guardian may send in a signed note, e-mail, or call the school to give a one time authorization. We will need the full name of the individual picking up your child, and we will check their Driver's License or State Photo I.D. upon arrival. If an individual arrives to pick up your child that does not have documented clearance -or- your one time authorization, we will NOT release your child to this individual.

**Students enrolled in the After Care will begin this program immediately following 3:00p.m. dismissal. Students may be picked up by a parent/guardian or approved family member or friend any time between 3:00p.m. and 5:30p.m.**



Younger students in the 3-6 Class, as well as students who are enrolled in the ELC School Readiness Program must be signed out of After Care upon pick up. Sign in/out procedures for these groups are stated in the previous text.

**Blossom's tentative daily After Care schedule is as follows:**

**3:00-3:30p.m.:** Outside Time (students' assigned playground)

**3:30-4:00p.m.:** Snack Time (all students in the kitchen)

*\*Parents/Guardians are required to provide their child with an afternoon snack & drink each day.*

**4:00-5:00p.m.:** Craft/Activity Time (3-6 class students in their classroom)  
Homework Time (school age students in the Big Room.)

**5:00-5:20p.m.:** Free Choice (all students in Big Room)

**5:20-5:30p.m.:** Clean Up / Gather Belongings for Home (Big Room)

If you arrive to pick up your child during one of these times, and they are playing outside, eating snack, working on their homework, working on a craft/art project, or playing with a game/puzzle; please encourage them to quickly clean up and gather their belongings for home.

**After care services end promptly at 5:30p.m. The front door's coded entry system will be shut off after this time. If an extenuating circumstance or emergency prevents a parent/guardian from picking up their child prior to 5:30p.m. they MUST call or text the Director to make arrangements.**

- Julie Rutenberg, Director (727) 424-4194

**Each day we look forward to seeing the students arrive to school on time and go home safely with a parent/guardian at their proper dismissal or pick up time. We do ask that parents/guardians are cautious of arrival/dismissal times depending on the program(s) your child may or may not be enrolled in. If a child is dropped off early or picked up late, the child will need to sit with a staff member in the front office and a fee will be charged as follows:**

A Early Drop Off Fee of \$5.00 per child for every five minutes (\$1.00 per minute) prior to the hour of 8:20a.m. will start accruing any time prior to 8:19a.m. for any child NOT enrolled in Before Care. A check or cash will be accepted as payment at the time the child is picked up. The staff member on duty will calculate the total charge due

A Late Fee of \$5.00 per child for every five minutes (\$1.00 per minute) past the hour of 3:00p.m. will start accruing at 3:01p.m. for any child NOT enrolled in After Care. A check or cash will be accepted as payment at the time the child is picked up. The staff member on duty will calculate the total charge due.

A Late Fee of \$5.00 per child for every five minutes (\$1.00 per minute) past the hour of 5:30p.m. will start accruing at 5:31p.m. for any After Care student who is

picked up late. A check or cash will be accepted as payment at the time the child is picked up. The staff member on duty will calculate the total charge due.

## Attendance Policy:

Blossom is a unique learning environment. Due to our hands on approach to education, attendance is MANDATORY. Poor attendance at school will be detrimental to your child's success both academically, socially and emotionally.

Blossom recognizes there are extreme circumstances or health conditions. All of those situations need to be discussed with the Director prior to enrollment. A doctor's note MUST be provided in regards to your child's health conditions, and should include limitations (if any). We ask that this doctor's note be provided annually during the beginning of each school year and include any updates that the school should be aware of.

Blossom has 4 grading periods per year; each grading period is 45 days long. No one child is allowed to have more than twenty (20) unexcused absences for the entire school year, and no more than twenty-five (25) combined unexcused and excused absences for the entire school year. Any student exceeding the amount of allowed absences for the school year will need to attend a determination meeting with the Director & your child's teacher.

A Blossom student in grades K-8<sup>th</sup> grade is in danger of not being promoted to the next level if they are absent for more than twenty (20) unexcused days.

A Blossom student that is absent for twenty-five (25) excused/unexcused or more days WILL NOT be promoted to the next level.

### **ABSENCES**

A student who is not present during a Specials class (i.e. P.E./Health, Art, Music) at least one half of the class period shall be counted as absent from that class. To be counted present for the school day, a student must be in attendance for at least one half of the Great Work time during the school day.

### **Excused absence -**

Students must be in school unless the absence has been permitted or excused for one of the reasons listed below. A written absence note must be provided by a parent or guardian in order to excuse the absence once the student returns to school:

- A student is ill or injured. If your child is sick or injured three (3) or more consecutive days, a doctor's note MUST be provided.
- The student has a scheduled medical or dental appointment, procedure or surgery. A doctor's note MUST be provided.
- There is a major illness in the student's immediate family (this means parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, or others living in the home).
- There is a death in the immediate family.

- The student attends religious instruction or there is a religious holiday in the student's own faith.
- The student is required by summons, subpoena or court order to appear in court. A copy of the subpoena or court order must be given to the Director.
- Special event. Examples of special events include important public functions, conferences, state/national competitions, as well as exceptional cases of family need or an educational enrichment activity (i.e. take your child to work day).
- Students having, or suspected of having a communicable disease or infestation which can be transmitted are to be excluded from school and are not allowed to return to school until they no longer present a health hazard. \*\*Examples of communicable diseases and infestations include, but are not limited to, fleas, head lice, ringworm, impetigo and scabies. Students are allowed a maximum of five (5) excused days for each infestation of head lice. A doctor's note must be provided to return to school.

Students on a field trip and students who must attend in-school suspension are not considered absent.

#### **Unexcused absence -**

Any absence which does not meet the criteria of an excused absence is an unexcused absence. The following are examples of unexcused absences.

- Out-of-school suspensions
- Family time, vacation or special occasion
- Students without a completed Health Examination/School Entry form and/or Certificate of Immunization indicating compliance with the current required schedule of immunizations will not be allowed to attend classes until this document is provided or a waiver is obtained. Absences due to non-compliance with immunization requirements shall be considered unexcused. However, students transferring into Pinellas County, including foster care students, or homeless students, a temporary 30-day waiver of both health examination documents and certificates of immunization will be granted.

Please note - we do recognize the need for family time, vacations and special occasions. We embrace special time spent between a parent and child. We can work with you to ensure the least amount of optimal learning time is lost during a planned absence.

#### **Excuse Forms-**

A student who has been absent must bring a completed Excuse Form or written excuse note signed by a parent/guardian on their first day back at school. Each student will be given several blank Excuse Forms at the beginning of the year. Additional forms are available on the rolling desk in the front lobby.

## **TARDINESS**

The start up exercises of a Montessori school day sets the pace for the rest of the day. Every effort should be made to ensure your child arrives to school on time. If your child is tardy they must be escorted in to the building by a parent or guardian and a tardy note should be turned in to staff in the front office. This is to ensure the safety of our students, and allows for the teacher to be notified if the tardiness is excused or not.

Blossom's academic hours start at 8:30am. All students & staff are required to meet in the front lobby for the Pledge of Allegiance and morning announcements. A student is considered tardy when the student arrives after 8:31am. If your child is late we do ask you to walk your child into the school and provide an excuse to an administrative staff member; however, we do ask that you refrain from entering the classroom and disrupting the class in progress.

### **Excused Tardy**

A tardy is excused only if the student is late for one of the reasons listed under excused absences (i.e. illness, medical or dental appointment, etc). A written excuse note from a parent or doctor **MUST** be provided in order to excuse the tardy.

### **Unexcused Tardy**

A tardy is not excused unless it is caused by reasons listed under excused absences (i.e. illness, medical or dental appointment, etc). Examples of unexcused tardies include:

- Oversleeping
- Shopping trips
- Pleasure trips
- Car problems (ex: flat tire, no gas, car won't start)
- Heavy traffic
- Returned for forgotten item (i.e. forgotten homework, project, lunch)

Chronic tardiness is unacceptable and unfair to other students because instruction is interrupted every time a late student arrives. Every three (3) unexcused tardies are considered one (1) unexcused absence. Additionally, individual consequences for tardy students may apply (i.e. detention).

If the Director or your child's teacher feels attendance or tardiness is becoming a factor in your child's education a conference will be called. Extreme unexcused absences can lead to dismissal from Blossom.

*"Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood."  
Helen Keller*

## **EARLY SIGN OUT**

Once a student arrives at Blossom, they may not leave without permission from an administrator. Students who must leave school during school hours must have their parent request this release by phone or in person to the office in order to obtain pre-approval.

### **Excused Early Sign Out**

The same criteria used to determine excused absence and an excused tardy will be used to determine whether an early sign out is excused.

### **Unexcused Early Sign Out**

The same criteria used to determine unexcused absence and an unexcused tardy will be used to determine whether an early sign out is unexcused.

Numerous incidents of early release are unacceptable and unfair to other students whose instruction is interrupted each time a student leaves early. Every three (3) unexcused early sign outs will count as one (1) excused absence.

## **MAKE-UP WORK**

Make-up work does not consist of just the regular homework normally given during the regular school week. The work provided by the teacher is work that the student missed during the school day. Make-up work counts for credit and a grade is allowed for both excused and unexcused absences; however, specific rules apply.

### **Make Up work during a non-planned excused absence-**

Blossom recognizes that illnesses or family emergencies happen. Make-up work for credit and grade is allowed for all excused absences. It is the student's responsibility to get the missed work.

If the student was absent just one day, then the make-up work will be given to a child on a Friday and will count 100% if turned in its entirety the following Monday. Each day after that 25% will be taken off the assignments.

If the student was absent more than one day, then the number of days allowed to make up the work shall be the same as the number of days the student was absent, and will count 100% if the work is turned in its entirety on the due date provided by the teacher. Each day after that 25% will be taken off the assignments.

Please note there is some work that can not be made up.

### **Make-up Work during a planned unexcused absence / tardy-**

Blossom recognizes that each family has special occasions or trips that do come up. Make-up work for a credit and grade is allowed. It is the student's responsibility to get the missed work.

We request that parents or guardians give teachers at least 48 hours notice prior to the planned unexcused absence to allow time for the teacher to prepare make up assignments. Make up assignments must be turned in on the first day that the student returns will be graded at 100%. Each day after that 25% will be taken off the assignments.

If a teacher is not notified 48 hours prior to the unexcused absence then make-up work will be provided upon the student's return to school. The number of days allowed to make up the work shall be the same number of days the student was absent. Make up assignments must be turned in on the first day that the student returns in order to receive a grade at 100%. Each day after that, 25% of the grade will be taken off the assignments.

If the student has exceeded 25 or more unexcused / excused absences with over 50% of them being unexcused absences, the student will have the same number of days allowed for make up work; however the assignments will only be counted for 50% of the original grade.

Please note work made up after an unexcused absence in elementary or middle school may be dropped a letter grade. You should be aware that work made up after unexcused absences in most high schools will be dropped a letter grade, so it is important to start healthy habits now.

Please note there is some work that can not be made up.

**Make-up Work during a suspension:**

Make-up for credit and grade is allowed. It is the student's responsibility to get the missed work. Work is due on the day of return from the suspension - no exception.

Please note work made up after an unexcused absence in elementary or middle school may be dropped a letter grade. You should be aware that work made up after an unexcused absence in most high schools will be dropped a letter grade, so it is important to start healthy habits now.

Please note there is some work that can not be made up.

**We appreciate parental support and cooperation to ensure your child receives the best educational experience possible. The success rate of students who attend school regularly and without interruption is markedly higher than those for whom attendance is unstable.** The teaching staff and administrative team of Blossom will do everything possible to assist parents with the safe arrival of their children to Blossom on a regular basis. Parents are encouraged to inform the teaching staff and administrative team if extenuating circumstances will prevent a child from attending Blossom on a regular basis.



## Dress Code:

Students attending Blossom are *required* to wear uniforms Monday through Thursday. The uniforms consist of a polo shirt (purple, light blue, navy blue, yellow, grey, or black) with the Blossom insignia. Students may wear khaki/tan or navy shorts, slacks, skorts or skirts with shorts worn underneath, along with their Blossom uniform shirt. When the weather becomes cold, students may wear jackets, sweaters or sweatshirts over their Blossom uniform. Uniform shirts may be ordered from:

**ALLEN SPORTS CENTER**  
6585 Seminole Blvd.  
Seminole, Florida 33772  
(727) 397-0421

### **Hours of Operation**

Monday-Friday 9:00am-6:00pm  
Saturday 9:00am-5:00pm

### **Pricing**

Polo - Youth - \$14.99 / Long Sleeve \$22.99  
Polo - Adult - \$17.99 / Long Sleeve \$24.99

On Friday, students are allowed to wear clothing of their personal choice. Please note the following guidelines for Fridays:

**Shirts must overlap pants.** Students will do a great deal of work sitting on the floor, as well as physical movement inside and outside the classroom. Students must wear shirts that cover their body when sitting on the floor. No tank tops, spaghetti strap, strapless, or belly shirts may be worn.

**Shorts, skirts, and pants** should be an appropriate modest length for working, exercising, and playing while at school. Shorts must be worn under skirts. Hip hugging pants must be covered by an appropriate length shirt. No skin should show when a student stands or sits down. Pants should be loose fitting enough so that students can participate in all activities. Clothing that advertises products dealing with or having references to profanity, alcohol, tobacco, drugs, sex, violence, or representing weapons or gangs will not be permitted.

**Facial piercings are unacceptable.** American Sign Language is a visual language. Obvious facial piercings are distracting. Additionally, there is possibility of injury when on the playground (getting hit with a ball or an inadvertent bumping or fall). Students must remove all visible facial piercings before coming to school. Earrings worn on the ear are not considered facial piercings.

**Shoes should be comfortable and appropriate** for outside events. Closed toe shoes or sneakers are required. Montessori classrooms are active and energetic. Footwear should be adaptable to outside as well as inside activity. No flip flops, crocks or open toe shoes may be worn to school.

**Hats/head covering may not be worn inside the building.** Hats or head coverings are not allowed in the classroom or inside the school. Students must remove any hats and/or head covering before entering the building. Hats may be worn outside while on the playground, if deemed

appropriate.

# Policies and Procedures:

## **Acceptance**

Blossom accepts children that are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, a hearing sibling of a Deaf or Hard of Hearing child, a CODA (child of Deaf adult) or hearing children who want to be immersed in Deaf Culture.

Our hearing students are placed in our pilot program. Our pilot program encompasses less than 25% of our student population which limits enrollment on pilot students.

Our application policy is as follows:

1. Parents or family member schedule a tour of the school with the Director.
2. A shadow date for the child is set up to spend a half-day or full-day (depending on the child's age) at the school and in classroom within their age group or level.
3. After the shadow day, the Director then discusses the child at length with the teacher to make sure the following items are met:
  - The child is a proper fit for that particular classroom.
  - The teacher and child are comfortable with each other.
  - The teacher can meet the needs of the individual child.
  - The teacher feels the child will be successful in our environment.
4. The parent is given a Student Application to fill out in its entirety. The child's IEP, 504 Plan, Service Plan, Therapy or Medical Reports may be requested at that time (if applicable).
5. The child's Student Application and requested documents are reviewed thoroughly with several members of the Blossom staff to ensure Blossom is a right fit for the child and that we can successfully meet his or her needs and provide a superior educational experience.
6. An acceptance, waitlist or denial letter is written by the Director. All children who are expected to our program are put on a 45 day probationary period. A meeting will be held with the Director at the end of the 45 days to discuss the student's future at Blossom.
7. If an acceptance letter is issued by the Director, the parent may then pay a non-refundable New Student Registration Fee to secure their child's spot for the school year.
8. Once both the New Student Application and Registration Fee is received, the Business Manager will schedule a meeting with the parent to allow proper time to out the required enrollment paperwork, turn in school year fees, arrange a tuition payment plan (if applicable) and turn in all required documents for the school year.

Please note: If a student is accepted to Blossom at any time other than the first day of the school year, the Director will advise the best possible start date for this child into Blossom's program.

## **Special Needs**

Blossom does accept children with Special Needs. A child with special needs is carefully considered. Blossom may not be the right fit for every child or be able to meet the needs of every child. Due to staff qualifications, a child with special needs must be able to function on his/her own medically and mobility wise in and out of the classroom. All children must be fully potty trained. If a child's special needs will detrimentally change the dynamics of a classroom, than Blossom may not be the right fit for that child.

Blossom does accept children with significant health impairments; however, Blossom does not have a school nurse or trained medical personnel on site. There may be some children who have serve health impairments that we may not be equipped to serve. Blossom will carefully take each child's health impairments into consideration to figure out if we are properly able to care for the child while under our supervision. It is under each parent's discretion to place their child in an environment without a school nurse or trained medical personnel.

Blossom does not accept children with severe Behavioral or Emotional Issues as our staff is not trained or equipped to accommodate the needs of that child.

## **Required Documents**

Upon enrollment and re-enrollment, the following documents are *required* on file for your child:

- Birth Certificate (must bring in original and a copy will be made)
- Florida Certification of Immunization Form DH 680 (original)
- Florida School Entry Health Exam Form DH 3040 (original)

Please note: all children must have an original and up to date Florida Certificate of Immunization Form DH 680 and Florida School Entry Health Exam Form DH 3040 completed and signed by your child's doctor on file with Blossom. These forms do expire and updated forms will be due no later than the day prior to the date of expiration. Both of these forms can be obtained and filled out at the County Health Department or from your child's doctor.

Students who do not have these forms on file at Blossom prior to the start of the school year will not be able to attend until these forms are turned in. This is a State mandated law.

Parents will also be required to fill out annual enrollment paperwork which will be provided to you at your child's Back-to-School / New Student Paperwork Meeting.

## **Release from School:**

No child will be released to anyone other than the legal parent(s)/guardian(s) unless verified arrangements have been made in advance with the teaching staff or administrative team, or the individual is listed on your child's "Approved Pick Up List", "Enrollment Form" or "Emergency Release Form".

**Language Communication:**

Each child attending Blossom will have a preferred mode of communication. The staff of Blossom will respect *each* child according to their ability and preference. Knowledge of American Sign Language is not a requirement for becoming a student at Blossom, but American Sign Language will be used, taught, discussed, and encouraged when appropriate. All students must accept and embrace the Deaf community - students will be required to use ASL to the best of their ability at all times.

**Parent/Administration Communication:**

The best way to communicate with a staff member from our Administration Team is via phone, VP or e-mail; however, we do ask that you give staff 24-hours to respond. If you would like to meet with a staff member from our Administration Team, please contact them directly to schedule up a meeting with advance notice at a time that is convenient for all.

**Parent/Teacher Communication:**

At the beginning of the school year, each student will be given a Communication Book (student planner) and a Communication Folder. These items will provide daily communication between parent and teacher. You may also communicate with your child's teacher via e-mail; however, we do ask that you give your child's teacher 24-hours to respond as they are not always available to check their e-mail throughout the academic day. Parent/Teacher meetings may be scheduled with advance notice during the teacher's planning time. Please contact your child's teacher directly via e-mail or Communication Book to set up a meeting. The Director will contact parents towards the end of September to schedule your child's 2015-2016 Growth & Development Meeting with your child's teacher.

**Communication Folder:**

Your child will receive a Communication Folder which they will be responsible to take home and bring back to school each day. All important information, memos, permission slips, report cards, event invitations, etc. will be sent home in your child's Communication Folder. There are two pockets in this folder and they are labeled - one side is for information that you will need to "read & keep home", and the other side is for information you must "sign and return to school". Please be sure to check your child's Communication Folder daily and return items the next day or by the assigned due date.

**Communication Book (Student Planner):**

Your child will also have a Communication Book (student planner) which they will be responsible to take home and bring back to school each day. This book is a way to provide daily communication between parent and teacher. Please take a moment to read messages from your child's teacher and respond as needed. You may use this book to send messages to your child's teacher if you have questions, concerns or notification of upcoming doctor/dentist appointments and teachers will respond as needed. Parents and teachers may also communicate through e-mail; however, we do ask that you give your child's

teacher 24-hours to respond. We do ask that parents and teachers communicate directly with each other as often as needed. Please be sure to check your child's Communication Book (student planner) daily and be sure your child returns to school with it the next day.

### **Confidentiality:**

Our administrative staff, instructional staff and therapy contractors are bound to a strict confidentiality agreement. Staff & contractors may not discuss student progress or activities with parent/guardians, unless it is about your child and the staff member is your child's teacher, therapist or the Director. If information is needed about your child, parents/guardians must contact your child's teacher, therapist or the Director.

Our volunteers are also bound to a strict confidentiality agreement. Activities performed by community and parent volunteers will be varied as determined by the classroom situation, teacher and/or administrator. Volunteers may not discuss student progress or activities with parents/guardians. Volunteers are instructed not to engage in conversation with parents or guardians regarding the performance or behavior of students attending Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf. All discussions about student performance or behavior should be held directly with the teaching staff or administrative team. If information is needed about your child, parents/guardians must contact your child's teacher or the Director.

Parents/guardians may need to meet with a staff member or contractor in an office or classroom to discuss confidential matters regarding their child. During this time we ask that parents and students please be courteous and allow them their space and privacy. If a parent/guardian or student happens to overhear or see a spoken or signed conversation regarding another student or family, please be respectful and keep that information confidential and private.

### **Visitors Policy**

Blossom's front door will remain closed and locked at all times. The front door has a coded entry pad and only those with a code will be able to enter the building without staff assistance. Only parents and school staff & consultants will be provided with this code. All other visitors, family & friends must ring the door bell and a staff member will allow secured entry into the building. Upon entry a staff member will ask visitors to provide proof of identity such as a state issued photo ID or driver's license, sign into the "Visitors Log" on the front credenza and the staff member will then issue a "Visitors Name Tag". The visitor must wear their issued name tag during their entire visit at Blossom and must be escorted by a staff member at all times. Parents/guardians who are just dropping off or picking up their child do not need to sign the Visitors Log or wear a Visitors Name Tag; however, if a parent/guardian is visiting the school for a meeting, special event, birthday party, volunteering or any other reason, then a parent must sign into the Visitors Log and check in with a Blossom Staff Member in the front office so a Visitors Name Tag can be issued.

## **Visiting Blossom**

Parents are always welcome to visit their child during the students' scheduled lunch time or observe their child during the school day. In order to make your visit as pleasant as possible, it is required that you first check with the Director to find out what activities are planned for the day.

A Montessori classroom depends on the child's ability to enjoy their uninterrupted great work time. Often, the presence of a parent or family member can distract a child from their expected studies. Please discuss any visits or observations with the Director in advance. If a visit would impede the normal functioning of the class, parents would be given an alternate day to visit.

Parents and families are invited to attend special events and other school activities throughout the year. Blossom staff will inform parents of special events and school activities in advance. All family events will be posted on monthly calendars.

## **Student Birthday Parties**

Parents are welcome to celebrate their child's birthday at school. Birthday parties for students **MUST** be scheduled in advance with your child's teacher and approved by administration team. Please send your request via e-mail to your child's teacher, and be sure to Cc the Director and Business Manager to ensure that another party is not scheduled for the same day of your requested party. Birthday parties may be scheduled ONLY on Friday afternoons from 3:00p.m. to 3:15p.m. We are unable to schedule birthday parties Monday through Thursday or during the academic day - no exceptions can be made. You may choose to have a birthday party with just your child's assigned class or with the all the students from all four classrooms. The administration team will notify parents via e-mail of your child's party to ensure student attendance. A parent/guardian should arrive by 2:45p.m. to set up in the kitchen for your child's party. Staff will not be available to help with the set up of birthday parties.

Please check with your child's teacher or administration team regarding student allergies, and take them into consideration when choosing your child's birthday treat. We strongly encourage healthy snack choices during the school day; however, we do allow parents to have the option of bringing in a healthy treat (i.e. fruit, muffins) -or- a sweet treat (i.e. cupcakes, cookies, ice cream cups, juice boxes) for their child's birthday party. All birthday treats MUST be store-bought, homemade treats are NOT allowed to be served due to licensing regulations.

We do ask that birthday treats are easy to serve and do not need to be cut as time for birthday parties is limited to 15-minutes. For example, bring cupcakes VS cake that needs to be cut (no cutting do to licensing regulations), or prepackaged individual ice cream cups/pops/bars VS scooping ice cream into bowls (no scooping due to licensing regulations), or juice boxes VS pouring juice into individual cups. If you are providing a birthday treat for your child's party, please be sure to bring proper paper or plastic products and utensils (i.e. paper

plates, napkins, forks/spoons). Birthday decorations such as table clothes or balloons are welcome, but optional.

### **Inclement Weather:**

On occasion, Florida experiences inclement weather. If the possibility exists for this to happen, parents/guardians are asked to heed local weather warnings and follow the advice given by weather experts. At no time should a parent/guardian risk their own safety, or that of their child, in order to attend Blossom. In these situations, parents/guardians should call/text first to see if Blossom's regular hours of operation are still in effect. Making up of days missed due to mandatory school closings will be announced via correspondence or e-mail, if necessary, during Family Events. If inclement weather strikes while school is in session, please contact the school *immediately* for information and pick up time/procedures. Please note we follow Pinellas County's schedule for closings or delays due to inclement weather, and we will advise you of such via e-mail as soon as it is reported to the Director. We will also make every effort to post school closings on Bay News 9 and Blossom's website [www.blossomschool.org](http://www.blossomschool.org).

### **Reporting Abuse**

Section 39.201(1)(a), Florida Statutes requires any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare shall report such knowledge or suspicion to the Abuse Hotline. According to section 39.205(1) Florida Statutes, any person who knowingly and willfully does not report known or suspected abuse is guilty of a first degree misdemeanor and is subject to criminal prosecution. Please note all of Blossom Staff, Contractors and Volunteers are Mandated Reporters by law.

**\*\*\* Abuse Hotline: 1-800-96-ABUSE \*\*\***

### **Use of School Resources:**

Students may not interfere with the operation of the computer network by installing personal software, shareware, or freeware. Any student who knowingly visits or downloads websites that are deemed by the teaching staff and administrative team to be improper, pornographic, or detrimental to the high standards of Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf will be held accountable. Punishment for such an offense could lead to dismissal.

### **Use of Student Lockers / Cubbies**

Blossom students will receive an assigned locker or cubby at the beginning of each school year. Lockers / cubbies may be shared with a sibling, but may not be shared with another student. Lockers / cubbies will remain unlocked at all times, so personal items other than book bag, lunch box, jacket, P.E. clothes, books should remain at home. Items such as cell phones, iPods, iPads, tablets, laptops, jewelry, toys, stuffed animals, etc. should not be brought to school. Students are responsible for keeping their assigned locker / cubby clean and tidy at all times. Student lockers, cubbies, desks and book bags may be subject to a random search & inspection at any time.



## **Promotion**

Blossom encourages every child to put forth their best effort daily. The Montessori curriculum is set up in 3 year increments:

- 3-6 Class is PreK3, PreK4 and Kindergarten
- 6-9 Class is Grades 1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> (lower functioning 3<sup>rd</sup> graders)
- 9-12 Class is Grades 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> (higher functioning 3<sup>rd</sup> graders)
- 12-15 Class is Grades 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup>

The teacher prepares a three (3) year plan for each child. Each child has his/her own curriculum. The teacher breaks down the curriculum into a one year plan. That one year plan is called a "Growth & Development Plan". Successful completion of their Growth and Development plan means the student is promoted.

## **Retention**

Blossom tries to set up all of its students up for success. There are rare situations where a child is performing below his or her capability level and they will need to be retained. The number one reason for retention is absences. A child that is often absent (excused or unexcused) is at risk for being retained.

All students must strive to meet Blossom's attendance policy; please refer to Blossom's Attendance Policy within this document for details. If a child exceeds the number of absences allowed within the school calendar year, the parents will be required to attend a determination meeting. At the determination meeting the child's placement for next year will be determined.

## **Transfer**

Blossom does accept children that transfer mid year from another school. All new students who transfer to Blossom mid year will need to have their school records turned into the Administration Office prior to their start date. Blossom will need half a grading period to create the child's Growth & Development Plan. All new students are placed on a 45 day probation period. Parents of students that receive state or county funding or scholarships should bare in mind scholarship important deadlines.

Blossom students who wish to transfer to another school mid year must give six (6) weeks written notice and all tuition & fees must be paid at that time to close out your child's account. Once your child's account is closed your child's new school may request student records from the Administration Office; however, staff will need a minimum 72 hours to prepare those documents. Parents of students that receive state or county funding or scholarships should bare in mind important scholarship deadlines.

## **Discipline**

Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf takes a positive reinforcement approach towards discipline. Blossom does not believe in or condone corporal punishment.

## **Suspension**

Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf expects proper “Blossom” behavior from students at all times. The use of inappropriate language (spoken or signed) or any other inappropriate behavior such as hitting, pushing, pinching, biting or rough play on campus will result in immediate suspension. A first offence will result in one day of in-school suspension, a second offence will result in one day of out-of-school suspension, and a third offence will result in three days out-of-school suspension. Any offence thereafter will result in a determination meeting with the Director and parent(s)/guardian(s) to determine the best possible behavior action plan for the child or if dismissal from Blossom may be necessary. This is done in order to protect the safety and integrity of all of the students attending Blossom. All suspensions will be the decision of the administrative team.

## **Dismissal**

Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf places high standards on all of its students. The use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs, weapons, profanity (spoken or signed), abusive language (spoken or signed), physical/written threats, bullying / harassment, cyber bullying, sexual harassment, or any other inappropriate behavior on campus will result in immediate dismissal. This is done in order to protect the safety and integrity of all of the students attending Blossom. All dismissals will be the decision of the administrative team.

## **Drugs, Alcohol & Smoking**

Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf is a DRUG FREE - ALCHOL FREE - SMOKE FREE environment!! Blossom has a zero tolerance for drugs, alcohol, and tobacco products. If a child is found on campus with drugs, alcohol, or tobacco in their possession, that child will be immediately expelled.

## **Weapons**

Blossom has a zero tolerance for firearms or weapons of any kind. Should a child be found on campus with any type of weapon, knife, razor, firearm, etc., that child will be expelled immediately. Toy weapons are also strictly prohibited.

## **Sexual Harassment**

Blossom has a zero tolerance for sexual harassment of any kind. Blossom is committed to providing a school environment that ensures the equality, dignity, and respect of every student. In keeping with this commitment, Blossom strictly prohibits discriminatory practices, including sexual harassment, and will not deny or limit the ability of any student to participate in, or benefit from, any Blossom school program on the basis of sex. Sexual harassment, whether verbal, physical or environmental, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated, whether it occurs on school grounds or at outside school-sponsored activities. This policy applies to all Blossom Schools’ employees and students. All Blossom employees have a duty to ensure that no student is subjected to sexual harassment and to help maintain a school environment free of such harassment. If a child is found guilty of sexual harassment, that child will be immediately expelled.

# Bullying / Harassment Policy

*\*\*Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf adheres to the strict Bullying / Harassment Policy based on the Florida Statutes. We consider bullying and harassment a very serious matter and it will not be tolerated.*

Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf is here to provide a safe learning environment for all of our students, families and staff. If a child is found guilty of any of the infractions mentioned in the Florida Statutes in the pages that follow, discipline actions will be taken as listed in the steps below. The severity of the infraction will play a major role in the way Blossom's staff will handle the situation. Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf's sole priority is to educate in a safe environment.

Below are the steps Blossom will take to ensure safety:

1. If a child is found guilty or involved of bullying or harassing as mentioned situations listed in the Florida Statutes; he or she will be removed from the situation and brought to the child's teacher. The teacher will determine the severity of the situation. If this happens in the presence of the child's teacher, the child will be brought to the Director. If this situation is deemed serious, the child will have a behavior report written up, parents will be immediately contacted, and the child will be sent home for the rest of the school day.
2. If this is a second offense, the child will again have a behavior report written up and will be suspended for the rest of the school day and the following school day. A meeting with our Behavioral Therapist will be set up with the child if they are enrolled in therapy. If the child is not enrolled in therapy, then it will be strongly recommended and a request for parental permission will be issued by the school.
3. If this is a third occurrence, the child will be suspended for the rest of that school day and the following three school days. A visit to the child's doctor and/or a psychologist will be required. A note from the child's doctor and/or psychologist will be required to return to school with confirmation that the child is under medical care and is at no risk of harming others.
4. Finally a fourth occurrence will result in expulsion.
5. In a severe case, Blossom reserves the right to automatically expel or call in law enforcement at a moments notice. Blossom will have zero tolerance for severe cases which pose an immediate threat or harm to others.

*\*\*Please note each situation will be considered individually. Blossom understands that each child has their own unique characteristics. Blossom accepts and embraces each child as an individual, but recognizes that our specialized environment is not always a best fit for each child.*

## Florida Statutes Policy on Bullying / Harassment

***Bullying/Harassment:*** Statute [1006.147](#) (2008) prohibits bullying or harassment of any student or employee of a private or public K-12 educational institution. during any program or activity conducted by a private or public K-12 educational institution, during any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity, or through the use of data or computer software accessed through a computer, computer system or network of a private or public K-12 educational institution. Specific definitions of bullying and harassment are outlined in the statute. Statute [1006.147](#) (2008) provides immunity from a cause of action to a school employee, school volunteer, student, or parent who promptly reports in good faith an act of bullying or harassment to the appropriate school official.

Statute [1006.147](#) (2008) requires school districts to adopt a policy prohibiting bullying and harassment of any student or employee of a private or public K-12 educational institution. The policy must substantially conform to the model policy of the state Department of Education, and must afford all students the same protection regardless of their status under the law. It requires “a procedure for providing instruction to students, parents, teachers, school administrators, counseling staff, and school volunteers on identifying, preventing, and responding to bullying or harassment.” Additional requirements of the policy are outlined in the statute.

State Board of Education Administrative Rule [6A-19.008](#) (1985) requires schools to have environments that are free of harassment and prohibit any slurs, innuendos, or other verbal or physical conduct reflecting on one's race, ethnic background, gender, or handicapping condition, which creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment, or interferes with student's school performance or participation or other educational opportunities.

***Cyberbullying:*** Statute [1006.147](#) (2008) prohibits bullying and harassment prohibits bullying or harassment of any student or employee of a private or public K-12

educational institution through the use of data or computer software that is accessed through a computer, computer system or computer network of a private or public K-12 educational institution. The definition of "harassment" in the statute includes any threatening, insulting or dehumanizing gesture, use of data or computer software, or written, verbal, or physical conduct directed against a student or school employee that does one of the following: (1) places them in reasonable fear of harm or to his or her person or damage to his or her property, (2) substantially interferes with a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits, or (3) substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a school. The definition of "bullying and harassment" includes perpetuation of actions by an individual or group with intent to demean, dehumanize, embarrass, or cause physical harm to a student or school employee by accessing or knowingly causing or providing access to data or computer software through a computer, computer system, or computer network within the scope of the district school system.

To report a possible incident of bullying/harassment as defined in Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf's Policy against Bullying and Harassment and/or the Florida Statutes Policy on Bullying and Harassment, please contact the Director immediately. The Director will provide you with a Bullying/Harassment Report to fill out and record the incident. Once you complete the report, Blossom's Director will sign the document confirming it has been received, and a copy will be provided to you for your records. The incident will immediately be investigated by the Director and necessary action will be taken as needed.

You may also anonymously fill out a Bullying/Harassment Report online at [www.blossomschool.org/bullying-harassment-report/](http://www.blossomschool.org/bullying-harassment-report/).

Please note the same consequences that apply if engaging in bullying or harassment also apply to students and adults who wrongfully and intentionally accuse another as a means of bullying or harassment.

If you have any further questions about Blossom's Bullying / Harassment policy, please feel free to contact Blossom's Director, Julie Rutenberg via e-mail [jrutenberg@blossomschool.org](mailto:jrutenberg@blossomschool.org) or phone (727) 539-7879.

# Responsibilities of Parents:

Throughout the year, Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf will host monthly Family Events. All Blossom families are required to attend these events, and at least one parent or guardian must attend the events with their child. We may also request Parent Volunteers to help with some of these events or contribute in some way. Any family receiving any type of scholarship or financial assistance from Blossom are required to volunteer as needed and attend events. Most Family events are held the first Thursday of every month during the school year, but dates/ and times may vary if our event theme is holiday related or a special celebration. Parents are required to supervise their child during these events and we ask students to maintain Blossom behavior at all times. Family Events will be held on the campus of Blossom.

## **Family Events**

Blossom families ***must*** attend a minimum of **7** Family Events per school year. Attendance will be taken at each event. Any family that is receiving a financial scholarship or financial assistance will be at risk of losing their funding if they fail to attend Blossom's mandatory Family Events. \*On certain event days listed below, students will have a individual or class presentation or performance. Students will receive a grade for their presentations at the Science Fair, Culture Fest & Strokes of Genius. Please be sure your child is in attendance for those very important events.

## **2015-2016 Academic year - Family Event Schedule**

- **Thursday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>**                      **5:15pm-7:00pm**  
Back to School Orientation                      \*Student Presentation
- **Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup>**    **6:30pm-8:30p**  
Halloween Extravaganza                      Costumes Encouraged for ALL  
*(Parent volunteers needed for set-up. Sign up sheet & times will be posted.)*
- **Friday, November 20<sup>th</sup>**    **11:30am-1:30pm**  
Thanksgiving Feast                                      \*Student/Class Performances & Pot Luck  
*(Parent volunteers needed for set-up/clean-up. Sign up sheet & times will be posted.)*
- **Thursday, December 17<sup>th</sup>**    **6:30pm-8:30pm**  
Holiday Dessert Party                                      \*Student Presentations, Santa & Dessert  
Festive Holiday Dress Clothes for ALL  
*(Parent volunteers needed for set-up/clean-up. Sign up sheet & times will be posted.)*
- **Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup>**    **5:30pm-7:00pm**  
Science Fair    \*Student Presentations (Graded)
- **Thursday, April 7<sup>th</sup>**    **5:00pm-7:00pm**  
Culture Fest    \*Student Presentations (Graded)
- **Thursday, May 12<sup>th</sup>**    **10:30am-12:30pm**                      **(dress clothes)**  
Strokes of Genius Garden Party                      \*Student Art Presentations (Graded)  
Location: St. Petersburg Museum of Fine Arts
- **Friday, May 27<sup>th</sup>**    **8:30am-10:30am**  
Walk-A-Thon    Sneakers Required  
*(Parent volunteers needed for set-up, run event & clean up. Sign up sheet will be posted.)*
- **Thursday, June 9<sup>th</sup>**    **10:00am - 12:00pm**                      **(dress clothes)**

Stepping Up Ceremony

\*Student/Class Performances & Ceremony

Location: SPC Auditorium in Clearwater (Off of Drew Street)

## **Family Commitment**

Family Commitment and what it means at Blossom...

At Blossom, our goal is to teach children about life and learning through a positive supportive environment. A large part of the success of this school is the relationship we forge with the families of Blossom. In our busy lives we often need to stop and take stock of all that we have and to appreciate the value of 'everyday' life.

Part of the everyday life of Blossom is the interdependent relationship we have with the families of our students. We teach our children to get involved with their community on a regular basis and to embrace diversity and change. One avenue we have available to us is that of 'parent as teacher'. It is through the involvement of parents that we are better able to educate children. When the family supports the learning environment, the child understands fully the importance of education.

Blossom invites all families to assist in this learning journey through attending, participating and volunteering for Blossom activities, fundraisers and family events.

## **Family Commitment Hours**

All families will be required to commit 20 hours of volunteer services every year to Blossom by:

- Attending & Participating Monthly Family Events
- Volunteering to decorate or set up for Holiday Events
- Attending & Participating in Holiday Events
- Volunteering to decorate or set up for Holiday Events
- Volunteering to organize a Booster Fundraiser
- Collecting Silent Auction Items for Fundraising Events
- Attending and/or Participating in Fundraising Events
- Chaperoning Field Trips & School Events (if requested)

Families receiving private scholarships will be required to commit 30 - 40 hours of volunteer service (depending on the percentage of scholarship support), as well as sign up for weekly American Sign Language (ASL) classes at the Deaf Literacy Center (DLC), your local library or college if their child is deaf or hard of hearing. By giving back to the school families can show their child the importance of involvement within their own community.





# Parent Checklist

The following records must be on file with Blossom prior to the student beginning school each year. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to turn in any updated forms, reports or documents such as Immunization Record (DH 680), School Entry Health Exam (DH 3040), therapy reports, scholarship award letters/certificates as they are made available to you.

1. Student's Birth Certificate (copy made from original document)
2. Florida Certificate of Immunization Record (original Form DH 680)
3. Florida School Entry Health Exam (original Form DH 3040)
4. Audiogram (if applicable)
5. IEP Plan (if applicable)
6. 504 Plan (if applicable)
7. Previous School Year Student Records & Therapy Reports (required for ALL new students - i.e. report cards, progress reports, assessment reports, attendance records, therapy evaluations, speech reports, OT reports, behavioral reports, etc.)
8. Scholarship Information & Award Letter/Certificates for any student receiving funding from McKay's, Step Up for Students Income Based (SUFS FTC), Step up for Students Special Needs (PLSA), Early Learning Coalition School Readiness (ELC SR), Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK), etc. (if applicable)
9. Judgment/Custodial Order of the Court (if applicable)

***\*Note: If there are custodial issues that in any way limit the access any parent has to the child, Blossom must keep a copy of the Court Order recognizing such status. No parent will be denied access to their child without an Order from the Court or other official documentation clearly defining such circumstances.***

The following annual registration forms must be completed, signed and on file with Blossom prior to the student beginning of the school year. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to update this information as the year progresses should any changes occur such as person authorized to pick up the child, phone numbers, addresses, allergies, medications, etc. All school year fees are due at the time of registration and are non-refundable.

1. Student Application
2. Student Enrollment Form (green)
3. Emergency Release (yellow) - 3 notarized originals
4. Child's Health & Development Questionnaire
5. Influenza Pamphlet
6. Food Experience Permission Form
7. Photo / Information Release
8. Field Trip / Transportation Release
9. Parent / Provider Agreement
10. Before & After Care Enrollment Form
11. Approved Pick Up List
12. VPK Policies & Procedures (if applicable)
13. Annual Enrollment Fee (\$125 New Student Enrollment / \$100 Re-Enrollment)
14. Annual Materials Fee (\$75)

# Student Illness & Medication

## Student Illness

If a student becomes ill or shows signs of not feeling well while they are at school, a Blossom staff member will take the child's temperature, identify by communicating with the child any specific symptoms such as upset stomach, headache, sore throat, cough, etc. The parent will be contacted if the child represents any symptoms of illness. In the event of vomiting, diarrhea, fever or rash, parents will be contacted and are *required* to pick up or arrange for an approved person to pick up their child from school within 30 minutes of being contacted. The student will not be permitted to return to class until they are **free from symptoms** for a 24 hour period - meaning one full school day at *minimum* or 24 full hours after the last symptom of vomiting, diarrhea, fever, cough, sore throat, or rash (etc.) ends completely. *Example: If your child is sent home from school with a fever on Monday at 12:30pm, they must stay home from school for a full day on Tuesday to rest. IF their fever does not break until 9:30pm Tuesday night, then your child must stay home for another full school day on Wednesday. If your child's has no fever all day Wednesday, then your child may be permitted back to school on Thursday. This ensures your child is symptom free for a full 24-hour period and is not contagious to other students.*

If your child is ill or begins to show symptoms of not feeling well at home such as vomiting, diarrhea, fever or rash, sore throat, cough; please do NOT send your child to school. Parents are *required* to keep their child at home until they are **free from symptoms** for a 24 hour period - meaning one full school day at *minimum* or 24 full hours after the last symptom of vomiting, diarrhea, fever, cough, sore throat, or rash (etc.) ends completely (see example in above paragraph).

If a communicable illness has been identified such as strep throat, chicken pox, etc., a doctor's note will be required in order for the child to return to school. Please remember that illnesses spread quickly through the school and we do not want to put the students or staff at risk of being infected.

If your child is absent please call the school or e-mail your child's teacher to notify us that your child will be out. A written note is *required* from a parent or guardian upon their return to school. If your child is absent more than 3 consecutive days a written note is required from your child's doctor.

Please remember when receiving medications such as antibiotics for your child, to request when possible, medications that can be given in the morning and evening or once a day when the child is not in school.

Blossom does not administer medications of any kind, unless it is a medical necessity due to a serious health condition. Parents are welcome to visit Blossom to administer any necessary medications at the appropriate time.

## **Administering Medication**

It is against Blossom's policy to administer any type of medication, ointments, lotions including sun block and mosquito repellent of any kind. If this presents a problem to the family, please contact the Director to discuss your personal situation and possible available options.

Medications will only be administered for students who have serious health conditions which require the child to take a dose of medication during the school day or in case of a medical emergency.

In order for staff to administer medication, the following three items are required:

1. A doctor's note will be required. The note **MUST** include the child's full name, date of birth, name of medication, amount of dosage (1 tablet, 1 teaspoon, 2 puffs), administered when (specific time(s) of day, as needed), administered from (start date & end date), authorized by (doctor's name and signature), and date the note was written. *A doctor's note that was written during the prior school year will NOT be accepted as the note must be written for the current school year.*
2. A parent/guardian will need to fill out a "Medication Record & Parent Authorization" form at the school. The form will require you to fill in the child's full name, name of medication, amount of dosage (1 tablet, 1 teaspoon, 2 puffs), administered when (specific time(s) of day, as needed), administered from (start date & end date), authorized by (parent/legal guardian's signature), and current date.
3. All medicine **MUST** be received in the original Rx container and box (if applicable). Medications should be turned in to the Director and will be kept in a locked storage cabinet at all times.

**IMPORTANT: Medication/Rx instructions MUST be listed *exactly* the same on the doctor's note, parent authorization and the original Rx container and box (if applicable). If Rx instructions do NOT match all items requested; or one or more of these items are not provided, staff may NOT under any circumstance administer medication until all items are received with proper instructions.**

Please note: Students may NOT at any time self-administer medication on campus; including but not limited to pain medication, cough medicine, cough drops, antibiotic, asthma inhalers, etc. All medications must be kept with the Director in a locked storage cabinet and the procedure above must be followed.

## **Medical Emergency Procedures**

In cases of extreme medical emergency and the calling of 911 and an ambulance or paramedics is warranted:

- Discretion will be used and a staff member will call “911” immediately, if necessary, while another staff member contacts the parent.
- A staff member will make every effort to contact a parent or guardian first. *If a parent can not be reached, staff will then contact the parent authorized emergency contact listed on the child’s “Emergency Medical Release” form.*
- A staff member will make arrangements for a qualified or certified interpreter to meet the child at the hospital.
- If no parent or guardian has been able to be contacted, a staff member will accompany the child to the hospital in the ambulance.
- The child will be taken by ambulance to the parent authorized hospital listed on their “Emergency Release” form.

The closest hospitals to Blossom are as follows:

Largo Medical Center  
201 14<sup>th</sup> Street Southwest, Largo, Florida 33770  
(727) 588-5200  
*Estimated 16-19 minutes / 6.6 miles*

Morton Plant Hospital  
300 Pinellas Street, Clearwater, Florida 33756  
(727) 462-7000  
*Estimated 20-22 minutes / 9.3 miles*

Mease Countryside Hospital  
3231 McMullen Booth Road, Safety Harbor, Florida 34695  
(727) 725-6111  
*Estimated 21-23 minutes / 12.1 miles*

All Children’s Hospital  
501 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701  
(727) 898-7451  
*Estimated 18-24 minutes / 13.7 miles*

*“Happiness is a choice, and once this is understood, one blossoms.”  
Anne DeLenclos*

## Lunch & Snacks:

Lunch and snacks are not provided by Blossom. We encourage you to pack your child a lunch and snacks that are nutritious and will help to sustain them until they depart from school. Students will be allotted time for a mid-morning snack in their classroom. After the student's morning work cycle; they will enjoy 15 minutes of recess outside (30 minutes for the 3-6 students), followed by 30 minutes for lunch. All students eat lunch in the lunch room with staff supervision. Students who are enrolled in After Care will enjoy an afternoon snack break as well.

It is the parent's daily responsibility to pack a healthy lunch, 2-3 snacks and 2-3 beverages as follows in an insulated lunch box with a cold pack:

- 1 healthy mid-morning snack & drink
- 1 healthy & complete lunch containing a main meal or sandwich, side snack (i.e. fruit, veggies, yogurt, apple sauce, granola bar, etc.) and drink (i.e. water, juice, Gatorade, etc.)
- 1 healthy afternoon snack & drink (if your child is enrolled in After Care)

Students may bring a refillable water bottle to school as we have a filtered water fountain with a bottle refilling station. Students may keep their water bottles with them throughout the school day. Please note all students are *required* to bring a refillable water bottle on their scheduled P.E. (Physical Education) day. Please make sure the students name is clearly marked on the refillable bottle and that it is brought home for proper cleaning

Be sure to pack a napkin, spoon and/or fork for your child's lunch depending on what is needed.

Be sure to cut up your child's food at home prior to arrival as staff is not allowed to cut or touch the student's food according to licensing regulations. Staff may of course help a student open a packaged product or drink.

Students may NOT use the refrigerator to keep their lunch or drinks cool due to licensing regulations. Please be sure you pack a cool-pack in your child's insulated lunch box to keep food from spoiling.

Students may NOT use the microwave to heat up their lunch. Please do NOT send your child to school with a meal that needs to be reheated in a microwave as we are unable to do so due to licensing regulations.

Please do NOT send your child to school with candy, junk food, caffeinated or carbonated beverages (i.e. soda, coffee) as they are not allowed at school and will be sent back home with your child.

Please remind your child to bring their lunch box to school each day. If your child happens forgets their lunch at home or in the car, a parent/guardian will be contacted as soon as we are made aware. A parent/guardian will have 30 minutes to make arrangements to bring their child's lunch to the school or order a lunch to have delivered by their child's scheduled lunch time. Staff is unable to provide a lunch or snacks to students as we do not keep food on premise due to licensing regulations.

## Homework:

Homework will be assigned throughout the year and will have a direct effect on your child's overall grade. Homework assignments typically have one or more purposes:

**Practice** homework is meant to reinforce learning and help the student master specific skills.

**Preparation** homework introduces material that will be presented in future lessons. These assignments aim to help students familiarize themselves with new material before it is covered in class.

**Extension** homework asks students to apply skills they already have to new materials / situations.

**Integration** homework requires the student to apply many different skills to a single task, such as book reports, science projects or creative writing.

Here are some general homework tips for parents:

- ❖ **Make sure your child has a quiet, well-lit place to do homework.**  
Avoid having your child do homework with the television on or in places with other distractions, such as people coming and going.
- ❖ **Make sure the materials your child needs, such as paper, pencils and a dictionary, are available.**  
Ask your child if special materials will be needed for some projects and get them in advance. If you have difficulty finding or supplying the necessary materials, please contact your child's teacher immediately to work out a solution.
- ❖ **Help your child with time management.**  
Establish a set time each day for doing homework. Don't let your child leave homework until just before bedtime. Think about using a weekend morning or afternoon for working on big projects, especially if the project involves getting together with classmates.
- ❖ **Be positive about homework.**  
Tell your child how important school is. The attitude you express about homework will be the attitude your child acquires. Arguing with your child about homework is not a productive solution.
- ❖ **When your child does homework, you do homework.**  
Show your child that the skills they are learning are related to things you do as an adult. If your child is reading, you read too. If your child is doing math, balance your checkbook.
- ❖ **When your child asks for help, provide guidance, not answers.**  
Giving answers means your child will not learn the material. Too much help teaches your child that when the going gets rough, someone will do the work for him or her.

- ❖ **When the teacher asks that you play a role in homework, do it.**  
Cooperate with the teacher. It shows your child that the school and home are a team. Follow the directions given by the teacher.
- ❖ **If homework is meant to be done by your child alone, give them their space.**  
Too much parent involvement can prevent homework from having some positive effects. Homework is a great way for kids to develop independent, lifelong learning skills.
- ❖ **Stay informed.**  
Talk with your child's teacher. Make sure you know the purpose of homework and what your child's class rules are.
- ❖ **Help your child figure out what is hard homework and what is easy homework.**  
Have your child do the hard work first. This will mean they will be most alert when facing the biggest challenges. Easy material will seem to go fast when fatigue begins to set in.
- ❖ **Watch your child for signs of failure and frustration.**  
Let your child take a short break if they are having trouble keeping her mind on an assignment.
- ❖ **Reward progress in homework.**  
If your child has been successful in homework completion and is working hard, celebrate that success with a special event (e.g., pizza, a walk, a trip to the park, play a board game together) to reinforce the positive effort.

When teachers and parents positively reinforce the importance of homework, the child learns at an early age how hard work and perseverance pay off. Indeed, a lesson to be used again in varied ways in the life of a child.

*"As knowledge increases, wonder deepens."  
Charles Morgan*

## Selected Readings and Websites:

If you are interested in learning more about the Montessori Method of teaching, American Sign Language, or Florida Law, check out these references!

### For Information about Maria Montessori:

[www.Michaelolaf.net](http://www.Michaelolaf.net)  
[www.webster.edu/~woolfm/montessori.html](http://www.webster.edu/~woolfm/montessori.html)  
[www.our-montessori.com/home.html](http://www.our-montessori.com/home.html)  
[www.montessoriconnections.com](http://www.montessoriconnections.com)

### For information about American Sign Language (ASL):

[www.commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/aslweb/browser.htm](http://www.commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/aslweb/browser.htm)  
[www.Gallaudet.edu](http://www.Gallaudet.edu)  
[www.deaflibrary.org/asl.html](http://www.deaflibrary.org/asl.html)  
[www.asluniversity.com](http://www.asluniversity.com)  
[www.lifeprint.com](http://www.lifeprint.com)  
<http://www.pplc.us/dlc/index.shtml>

### For information about the Deaf Literacy Center (DLC):

<http://www.pplc.us/dlc/index.shtml>

### For information about Child Abuse Laws in the state of Florida:

[www.myfloridaeducation.com/commhome/pdf/chiabuse.pdf](http://www.myfloridaeducation.com/commhome/pdf/chiabuse.pdf)

*“You can know the name of a bird in all the languages of the world, but when you're finished, you'll know absolutely nothing whatever about the bird... I learned very early the difference between knowing the name of something and knowing something.”*

*Richard Feynman*



## Other Things You Should Know...

\* \* \* \* \*

**Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf is a DRUG FREE - ALCHOL FREE -- SMOKE FREE school zone / work place!!** All Blossom staff members are subject to pre-employment Drug & Alcohol screening and may be re-screened at any time with or without reason. This is to ensure our school is a Drug & Alcohol Free.

Drugs can be illegal, prescription or legal such as alcohol. They are not appropriate for consumption while caring for children. No exceptions! Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf has a ZERO TOLERANCE for drugs and immediately dismisses any staff found to be in violation.

**Smoking of tobacco products is NOT permitted within 100 feet of school grounds at all times.** No person including parent/guardians, staff, board members, volunteers and visitors may be in possession of a lighted cigarette, lighted pipe, lighted cigar, or any other lighted tobacco product, in the school facility, including the outside grounds. NO smoking area has been designated. The purpose of this policy is to comply with the "Florida Clean Indoor Air Act" in protecting the public health, comfort and environment by creating areas in all school facilities that are free from tobacco smoke.

\* \* \* \* \*

Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs and athletic and other school-administered programs.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Blossom's mission includes the commitment to provide the absolute best academic, social and emotional environment for our students. We are working hard to develop our fundraising campaign in order to support the important work we are doing. We are also seeking out talented teaching professionals so that our students will have the best chance for success throughout their lives. This task is not easy nor is it inexpensive. We ask for a strong commitment from our families; as well. We strive to offer partial financial assistance wherever and whenever possible. Please contact our Director for a Partial Scholarship Application should you find the need for additional financial assistance.*

## **BLOSSOM'S MISSION STATEMENT:**

- ❖ To educate deaf and hard of hearing children, their hearing siblings and children of deaf adults (CODA), and prepare them for a lifetime of success in the community.

## **BLOSSOM'S VISION STATEMENT:**

- ❖ To be the premier education and communication center for families with deaf and hard of hearing children in the state of Florida.

## **BLOSSOM'S CORE VALUES & BELIEFS:**

- ❖ We celebrate the uniqueness of every child.
- ❖ We believe that all children possess the ability to learn and succeed.
- ❖ We believe that all children deserve the opportunity to learn to fully participate in their community.
- ❖ We believe partnerships with our students, their families and the community are essential in accomplishing our mission.
- ❖ We value and encourage creativity and innovation.
- ❖ We value self-motivation and independent thinking.
- ❖ We respect and appreciate everyone for his or her individual differences.
- ❖ We value the importance, embrace the culture and welcome the involvement of the Deaf community.
- ❖ We believe everyone is responsible and accountable for his or her own actions.
- ❖ We believe all communication is important and we accept the responsibility to understand and be understood by others. Because of this, we focus on developing our students' skills in both American Sign Language (ASL) and English.

*"No one can be free unless he is independent."  
Maria Montessori*

# Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf



## Parent-Student Handbook Acknowledgement 2015-2016 School Year

My signature below confirms that I have read, understood and agree to comply with, all items of this handbook. Before signing this acknowledgement, I was given the opportunity to ask the Director of Blossom, Julie Rutenberg questions about, and discuss all said items and I, on this day, do agree with these conditions. If I have any questions or concerns in the future, I am aware that I may contact the Director at any time via phone (727) 539-7879, VP (727) 222-4209 or e-mail [jrutenberg@blossomschool.org](mailto:jrutenberg@blossomschool.org).

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*Student Signature*

*Print Name of Student*

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*Parent / Guardian Signature*  
*Guardian*

*Print Name of Parent /*

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\_\_\_\_\_  
*Parent / Guardian Signature*  
*Guardian*

*Print Name of Parent /*

*Date* \_\_\_\_\_