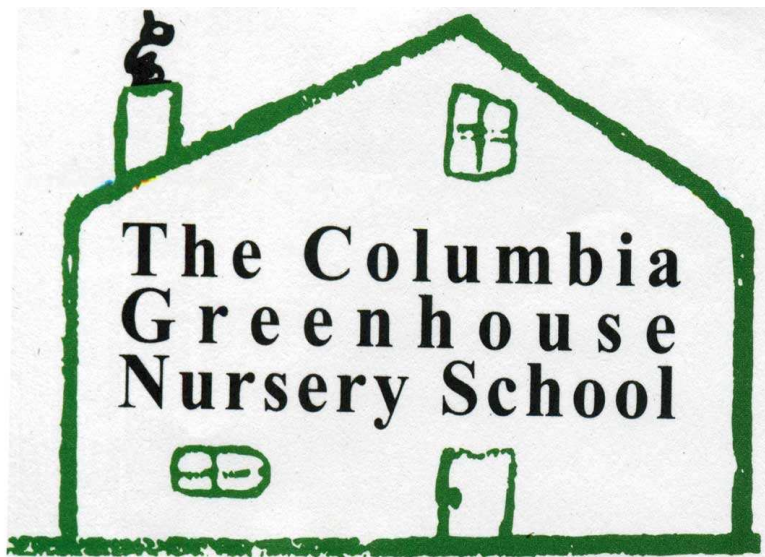


# **Columbia Greenhouse Nursery School**

## **2011/2012 Parent Handbook**



## **WELCOME**

Welcome to Columbia Greenhouse Nursery School. We hope you will find that our community is a friendly and supportive environment for parents. To ensure a healthy, safe and consistent environment for everyone, we have developed a group of policies that are included in this handbook. We find that our programs run more smoothly if everyone makes an effort to be familiar with our policies and to follow our policies.

## **HISTORY**

The Columbia Greenhouse Nursery School was organized as a play group in 1919 and is one of America's oldest nursery schools. Columbia Greenhouse is an independent, not-for-profit, and nonsectarian early childhood school. Columbia Greenhouse is licensed by the New York City Department of Health, accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and registered with the New York State Department of Education. It is one of ten early childhood programs affiliated with and supported by Columbia University.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Columbia Greenhouse Nursery School is committed to fostering the healthy emotional, social, intellectual and physical development of young children.

We believe young children learn best through engagement with stimulating materials, interaction with peers in small groups, and relationships with responsive and loving adults. We have carefully planned a warm and nurturing play-centered environment that encourages creativity, exploration, problem solving, independence, positive peer interactions and a sense of community.

In partnership with parents and families we cultivate each child's uniqueness and strengthen self-esteem through the development of skills, interests, and socialization. We understand the creation of active, life-long learners to be rooted in a child's positive sense of self, as well as their continuing and joyful curiosity.

*John Dewey, the noted Columbia University philosopher, stated, "Play is the child's way of learning." Play is an exploration, an experiment and an adventure that fosters involvement, concentration and imagination. Through building, cooking, painting, pretending, climbing, talking, and interacting children learn about the world around them and lay a foundation for more formal development in reading, writing, mathematics and other disciplines. Greenhouse provides a structured yet comfortable environment, amply equipped for the "work" of play.*

## **BEGINNING THE SCHOOL YEAR**

We have a gradual phasing-in process at the beginning of the school year so that each child will have ample time to adapt to a new setting while a familiar person is available to offer support. Please plan to stay with your child the first day of school. In the younger classes, a parent or a caregiver generally remains in the classroom or nearby in the parent lounge for a few more days. Sometimes children experience more difficulty with separation for a longer period of time, and in this situation the teacher will discuss an individual plan with you.

When in the classroom, please be seated and available to your child if your child needs you. It's a good idea to allow the teachers to help your child become engaged in the classroom. As your child begins to feel comfortable, you and the teacher will decide on a time for you to begin to leave the classroom. At all times, it is important to let the teacher know when you are leaving the room and to always say goodbye to your child. Although a goodbye may cause tears, it is important for your child, in building a trusting relationship with you and the teachers, to be prepared for your leaving and to know when it will take place.

While you are in the classroom, we ask that you refrain from taking calls on your cell phone as these conversations are a distraction in the classroom.

During the phase-in period, there will be coffee, tea or juice and some snacks provided in the common areas for parents. We invite you to take a few moments to relax and meet the other parents in your class while your child is becoming familiar with school. At the 404 building, wireless access is available in the foyer and coffee room. The wireless password is the school's phone number, 2126664796.

## **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIME**

We encourage parents to arrive on time as it is often difficult for children to move into the group when they arrive late. Please accompany your child to the cubby area where outer clothing is left, and then go with your child to the classroom. It's helpful for the teachers to know of any changes in your child's usual schedule, such as a visitor at home, less sleep than usual or that a parent is away. Also, be sure to let the teacher know of any changes in plans for pick-up. In some classrooms there is a message book where you will write these messages. Be sure your child knows when you are leaving.

You will be asked to fill out the **Permanent Permission Pick-up Sheet** with the names of those persons who have permission to pick up your child throughout the year. When someone different is picking up your child on a particular day, you must fill out the **Temporary Permission Pick-up Sheet** with the person's name and verbally communicate this information to the teacher. If the pick-up plan changes during the morning, we need to be informed of the new arrangement by a parent. Please advise your caregiver that a change in pick-up plans, such as a last minute play date arrangement, must be communicated to the school by the parent. We request that parents refrain from checking and talking on cell phones during arrival and pick-up times. These particular times involve many emotions for the children, and we find that it is important for parents to be focused on their children at these times.

## **MORNING, AFTERNOON AND EXTENDED DAY SCHEDULES**

During the morning session children participate in a planned activity time, a discussion and sharing time, a music time, a group story, snack and outdoor play on the yard. The older morning classes conclude their day with lunch, which is eaten together in the classroom. The morning session ends for the 2 DAY/2's and 3 DAY/2's at 11:30 a.m., the 2/3's at 12:00 p.m. and the older classes at 1:00 p.m.

The 2's Afternoon begins at 12:45 p.m. and ends at 3:15 p.m. The 3's Afternoon class begins at 1:00 p.m. and ends at 4:00 p.m. The afternoon programs include the same components in their schedule as the morning sessions.

Our Extended Day program in the older classes takes place until either 2:45 p.m. or 3:45 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Children who stay for Extended Day have a rest on a cot, a snack, and an afternoon activity time. We supply a cot, sheet and blanket for rest. You have the opportunity to choose extended days for your child until the end of the second week of school at which time we make appropriate staffing arrangements. A commitment for one semester is required. You can choose one to four days, but you must use the same days each week. The scheduling of extended days takes place in the office.

## **CLOTHING**

We recommend that children wear comfortable, washable play clothes to school. We do a lot of messy work and painting and, even though we try to use smocks, it is likely that clothes will become soiled and stained. Sturdy shoes that fit securely are important for active and safe play. We find that Crocs often cause tripping and party shoes are too slippery. In order for children to safely negotiate the classroom, the steps to the yard and the equipment on the yard, we recommend sneakers or shoes with rubber soles.

At the beginning of the school year, an extra set of clothing needs to be left in school and placed in your child's cubby. The extra clothing should include socks, underwear, pants and a shirt clearly labeled with your child's name. Please check the extra clothes periodically to make sure the clothes still fit and are appropriate for the season and please replenish the clothes if your child has an accident. If you borrow extra clothes from the school, they too need to be washed and returned quickly to the school.

During cold weather, your child will need a warm winter hat, mittens, scarf, boots, and snow pants. The classes go outside all winter unless the weather is very cold or inclement. All of these articles need to be left in your child's cubby with your child's coat each morning.

## **FOOD, SNACK, AND LUNCH**

We ask that children do not carry snacks or treats into the classroom or receive them in the classroom. If your child would like a snack before or after school, please accompany your child to one of the common areas where they are welcome to eat. In the morning, a table is designated in the classroom where children may sit to finish eating breakfast. However, please note that food brought into the school must be free of peanuts and nuts. Bakery items such as muffins and bagels are not acceptable due to the requirements of the Peanut and Tree Nut restricted policy.

The school provides a snack each day that consists of an assortment of crackers and juice or water. Some classes ask parents to provide a supplemental snack of fruit or vegetables and the classroom teachers will provide a schedule for this.

Children in the older morning classes bring their own lunches to school. Popular lunch items include small sandwiches, yogurt, pasta, cheese and fruit. Items that need to be refrigerated should be securely wrapped, clearly labeled with your child's name and placed on a tray in the morning. Likewise, items that need to be heated must be wrapped in foil, labeled with your child's name and placed on the appropriate tray. We encourage nutritional foods and ask that you refrain from sending candy, soda, potato chips and other like snacks to school. The school provides a beverage at lunch, generally milk and water. All food sent in lunches must be free of peanut and nuts and their derivatives such as oils or flours.

## **EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING**

Whenever there is heavy snow or other severe weather, Greenhouse will follow the decision of the NYC Department of Education regarding closings. When New York City public schools are closed due to weather, Greenhouse will be closed. Listen to 1010 WIN or Channel 1 News to hear about closings.

## **MESSAGES AND PHONE CALLS**

If you would like to speak with your child's teacher, please leave a message with the office staff. Your teacher will be informed of the message and return your call at a time when she does not have classroom responsibilities.

When we are not available to answer the telephone, you will reach our answering machine. Please be assured that we frequently check our messages and pay particular attention to messages before the pick-up times. We will make every effort to deliver messages for you when necessary, but we do ask that care be given to confirming plans with friends and caregivers in the morning or evening.

## **MAIL BOXES, EMAIL, WEBSITE**

Each family has a mailbox in their child's classroom. The mailboxes are used for the communication of general information and reminders about Greenhouse activities. The mailboxes are not to be used for the distribution of information unrelated to Greenhouse.

We also communicate frequently by email with parents who have given us email addresses. In addition, announcements are also regularly posted on our website at [www.columbiagreenhouse.com](http://www.columbiagreenhouse.com).

Please be sure we have your correct contact information and update us when it changes

## **WAITING AREAS**

The coffee room at the 404 location and the cubby room at the 424 building are our designated waiting areas. We ask that you do not use the building's lobby at 404 for extended periods or for eating.

## **BIRTHDAYS**

Each child's birthday is recognized and celebrated in the classroom according to the routine set up by each classroom teaching team. The teachers will discuss their routine with you during the first parent meeting at the beginning of the school year.

## **CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

Greenhouse welcomes children with special needs who will benefit from participation in our program. We work with several agencies that support the inclusion of children with a wide diversity of abilities and learning styles. They provide specialists to work with individual children who need help entering fully into the life of the classroom. You may observe these special educators working in our classrooms.

## **CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGIST**

Our consulting psychologist spends time in the classroom on a regular basis and is available to faculty and parents for consultation. She is also available as a resource for parents on child development and parenting issues. Parents who wish to meet with the psychologist should contact the director and she will set up an appointment for you.

## **MUSIC SPECIALIST**

Our music specialist meets with the older classes weekly in half groups. She includes movement, singing, musical instruments and dancing experiences in these classes.

## **ENDING THE SCHOOL YEAR**

As we focus on the children's adjustment in the beginning of the school year, when June approaches, we begin to help children think about the school year ending. It is an opportunity for teachers and children to reflect and talk about the year and to share plans the children have for the summer and the next school year. In recognition of the strong sense of community that has developed through the year, a closing gathering is planned in each classroom to provide an opportunity to celebrate the experiences of the children, to say good-bye and to bring closure to the school year.

## **WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM**

If you have a problem related to finances, you should contact the director. For concerns about your child, talk with your teacher and the director as another resource. If you have concerns about a staff person, talk to that person and/or the director. To bring questions and concerns related to policy to the Board of Trustees for consideration, talk to your class parent or the Co-chairs of the Board of Trustees.

## **HEALTH POLICIES**

### **MEDICAL EXAM**

Greenhouse is registered with the New York State Department of Education and licensed through the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Our license is renewed every two years. The Department of Health requires that a medical record, which includes the results of a current physical examination and the child's immunization history, be on file with the school by the first day of school. **CHILDREN ARE NOT PERMITTED TO ATTEND SCHOOL IF THESE RECORDS ARE INCOMPLETE.**

### **ALLERGIES**

If a child is allergic to any food or has a special health condition, the details must be given on the medical form and specific guidance and information given to the office and the child's teachers. Each child with an allergy will have appropriate information posted in the classroom, the office and the play yards. If a child has a life threatening allergy, such as a peanut allergy, an emergency treatment plan will be developed and approved by the parent, the child's doctor and the school.

### **ILLNESS**

Children should not come to school if they are not feeling well or are unable to participate fully in the daily program, which includes time outdoors. A child who is not well cannot benefit from the program and jeopardizes the health of others. Specifically, a child who is coughing, sneezing or has a sore throat, headache, earache, upset stomach, diarrhea, or an undiagnosed rash, should remain out of school until these symptoms have cleared. Also, if a child runs a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit/38 degrees Celsius or more), even without other noticeable symptoms, he or she should not attend school and should not return to school until the fever has remained normal for a period of twenty four hours without medication.

Whenever a child becomes ill during the day, we will contact the parent and ask you or your caregiver to come to Greenhouse to pick up your child. A sick child will be brought to the office to be cared for until a parent arrives.

If your child will be absent, please inform the school in the morning by leaving a message on the machine. The office staff will let teachers know when children are absent. If your child is diagnosed with a contagious illness, such as chicken pox or strep throat, let the office know so we can inform the parents of the other children in the class of the exposure.

## **HYGIENE AND PREVENTATIVE PRACTICES**

We urge everyone in our community - parents, faculty members and children - to practice the following preventive and hygiene efforts to limit the potential spread of illness.

- a) Wash hands often. Washing with soap and water for at least 10 seconds is ideal. The teachers will help the children wash their hands often and thoroughly.
- b) Cover coughs and sneezes with tissue or by coughing into the inside of your elbow. Cough or sneeze into your sleeves - not your hands.
- c) As always, if a child (or adult) has been out with an illness that includes a fever, he/she must be free of fever without fever-reducing medication for 24 hours before returning to school.
- d) When dropping off or picking up a student at Greenhouse, please do not come into the building if you, or a child who may be with you at the time, is ill. Please ask the Greenhouse staff person at the door to bring the Greenhouse child to the classroom or pick your child up at the end of the day. Please share this information with everyone who is transporting your child to and from school.

## **PEANUT AND TREE NUT RESTRICTED POLICY**

Columbia Greenhouse follows a peanut and tree nut restricted policy to protect children who are allergic to peanuts and/or tree nuts. An allergy to peanuts/nuts is very serious and potentially life threatening because the ingestion of a peanut/nut product or just being in close proximity to peanuts/nuts or a product of peanuts/nuts can trigger a sudden, severe reaction known as anaphylactic shock, or the closing of the breathing passages in an allergic child.

Our peanut and tree nut restricted policy states that any food made with peanuts or nuts or the by-product of peanuts or nuts cannot be brought into our buildings at any time. This includes products made with peanut/nut oil or products that may have come in contact with peanuts/nuts or peanut/nut oil (plain M&M's, jelly spread with a knife that has been in the peanut butter jar, etc.).

We ask for everyone's cooperation in following this policy. Foods packed in lunches, special snacks, or food brought into the building at any time must be peanut and nut free. Please take time to check the ingredients on packages of all processed food, particularly snacks. Lunchables, a popular lunch with children at this time, often include treats that contain products of peanuts.



We request that you inform caregivers of these restrictions, which apply to siblings or any other children or adults who come into the school. Our teachers will provide additional security by checking foods and ingredients in foods that are brought in lunches. (Please see additional handouts for more information)

## **MEDICAL EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

If your child should get seriously hurt or sick during the day, we will contact you immediately. If we feel the situation needs immediate attention, we will call an ambulance and go to the pediatric emergency room at St. Luke's Hospital at Amsterdam Avenue and 113<sup>th</sup> Street and meet you there. Please be sure you have filled out and submitted the Blue Family Information Form which gives school personnel permission to get necessary treatment for your child in the event a parent cannot be reached. It is also important that your current work and home telephone numbers are on the Blue Family Information Form and updated if any changes occur during the year.

## **METHOD OF DISCIPLINE**

Our excellent staff/child ratio and subsequent close supervision of the children reduces the potential for negative behavior that is sometimes shown between children. Also, we believe that setting clear expectations and limits helps children act in positive ways. We also encourage children to express themselves verbally rather than resorting to physical means. If a child is aggressive or disruptive, we will remove the child from the group and talk about what has happened. If the behavior is repeated there will be a consequence such as losing the privilege of participating in an activity or playing with particular children. If a child continues to display negative behavior we will speak with the parent(s) and together formulate a plan to help your child

## **SAFETY POLICIES**

### **SAFETY PROCEDURES FOR ENTERING AND LEAVING THE BUILDINGS**

Because of the nature of our buildings, it is necessary to follow routines that will ensure the safety of the children in our buildings. Since neither building is equipped with an intercom system, it is necessary for you to ring the bell of the school on arrival and then wait for someone to open the door. A staff person is at the door each morning until 9:20 and at pick-up times. During the course of the day, parents and caregivers often help with answering the doors, and we appreciate this help. We must ask, however, that you do not open the door for anyone unless it is a parent or caregiver that you know. Also, the doors may not be propped open for any reason unless someone is monitoring the door. If your child attends a class in the 424 building (3/4's, 2/3's, 3's Aft.), please be sure to pull the door shut when you enter and leave. The door does not close on its own. Pull it shut even if people are standing near the door in the hallway.

In addition, special precautions need to be followed at pick-up times, which can be crowded and a little hectic. Children may not leave the cubby rooms alone. They must be with an adult in the

404 lobby and 424 hallway at all times. Children should not open the lobby doors leading outside at anytime even if they are with you or helping you leave the building. It is important that both teachers and parents consistently follow this routine to prevent a child from casually walking outside or opening the door for someone waiting to come into the building. Finally, children may not run up or down the ramp at 404 and they may not play on railing along the ramp at 404 or on the stroller rack at 424. It is important that you share this information with everyone who will be bringing or picking up your child. We very much appreciate your cooperation in helping us keep the buildings safe throughout the year.

## **EMERGENCY PLANNING AND EMERGENCY PRACTICE ROUTINES**

Our two locations place us in a good position should we need to respond to an emergency. The two buildings are an advantage because classes can gather in one building, one that is familiar and equipped for children, should there be a fire or emergency in the other building. Greenhouse is also fortunate to be located in close proximity to several Columbia buildings that have large lobbies and other spaces that would house our school in the event that both of our buildings were evacuated.

The staff and children practice three routes to exit each building. They practice one route from one building to the other along the front sidewalk and from one building to the other through the back stairways to our yards. The third route practiced leads from each building to the June and William Warren Hall (Columbia Business School building) on Amsterdam Avenue that is reached by going through the back walkway that connects our buildings with Amsterdam Avenue. Each classroom has posted instructions that detail the three emergency plans. A master list of the home, work and emergency numbers for every family and a flash light and radio are conveniently stored in each classroom and carried on each practice.

## **PARENTS**

### **THE PARENTS ASSOCIATION**

The Parents Association provides a place for parents to connect, talk and exchange ideas and information. Meetings are planned throughout the year to address the interests of the parent body. The Parents Association also supports the school's events and fund raising efforts by updating and involving families and encouraging participation. Each class representative attends meetings and acts as the liaison between members of the class and the association. However, all Greenhouse families are members of the Parents Association and encouraged to attend meetings and become involved in the association.

## **PARENT - TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Conferences are held with parents twice a year (see calendar for specific dates). This is a special opportunity for you to meet individually with your child's teacher and share in your child's life in the classroom. It is also an important time for the teacher to learn more from you about your child's interests and feelings. Conference days are scheduled but please feel free to arrange a meeting with your child's teacher at any time during the school year.

## **PARENT PARTICIPATION, MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

Greenhouse relies on ongoing parent participation in fundraising events and the committees of the school. We engage in fundraising for two principal reasons. The first is to give partial scholarships to deserving children who might otherwise miss the valuable opportunity of a nursery school experience - children whose presence contributes to the social and economic diversity of the Greenhouse community. The second is to provide faculty development opportunities that support and inspire our teachers.

Each family is asked to make one major contribution by serving as a class parent, a parent tour guide, as part of the newsletter team or as a co-chair or member of one of the annual fundraising events: Apple Day Bake Sale, Annual Auction/Dinner or Spring Fair. In addition to a major contribution, we ask that everyone cook for and work at the Spring Fair, make a tax-deductible donation of merchandise or services to the Annual Auction/Dinner and bake for the Apple Day Bake Sale.

Each family will receive a Parent Participation Form outlining the possible avenues of fulfilling your responsibilities as a family. Please complete the form and return it to the office during the first week of school.

The following events and meetings usually take place each year:

**Parent/Teacher Welcome Meeting** - a full school meeting followed by a classroom meeting for parents to meet their child's teachers before school begins. Special attention is given to the plans for the first weeks of school and how separation will be handled.

**Family Welcome Picnic** - a picnic to welcome all families to Greenhouse that is held on a Columbia campus lawn. Each family brings dinner and Greenhouse provides watermelon.

**Apple Day Bake Sale** - a bake sale with apple desserts and other goodies that takes place on the Columbia campus.

**Curriculum Night** - a group meeting for parents that is organized in the Fall to discuss the early childhood curriculum set up in the classrooms and the teacher's plans for the year.

**Parent Association Workshops** - meetings with a focus on issues of interest to parents that provide a supportive environment with a balance of presentation and discussion.

**Annual Dinner and Auction** - a fun evening with a catered dinner, lively auction, and dancing.

**Kindergarten Admissions Information Night** - a meeting focused on the process of applying to kindergarten for those parents who will be applying to kindergarten in the following year.

**Spring Fair** - an elaborate street fair on the school's block with games for children, wonderful food, rummage, rides, pony rides and petting zoo.

**Family Farewell Picnic** - a closing picnic that is held at the end of the year on a Columbia campus lawn. Parents bring a picnic dinner and Greenhouse provides watermelon for dessert.

**Annual Fund Appeal** - an annual appeal to parents, alumni and friends that supports financial aid and special projects.

## **RE-ENROLLMENT AT GREENHOUSE**

Re-enrollment forms for the next school year are mailed in early January to families who presently have children at Greenhouse. The return deadline for re-enrollment is early February and before the general admissions for new children takes place. A deposit of 20% of the next year's tuition is required at the time the re-enrollment form is due. The school will hold a place for your child only if the re-enrollment form and deposit are received by the specified deadline. Financial aid is also allocated at this time.

## **GREENHOUSE ADMISSIONS**

Columbia Greenhouse admits 55 to 60 new children each year. We begin processing applications in the fall for the following year. Tour groups are scheduled weekly from October through January to show prospective families the school.

We advise parents who plan to enroll siblings to submit their applications as early as possible and before the deadline of December 1. Siblings are given preference and admitted before new children are accepted. We also give preference to families affiliated with Columbia University.

## **KINDERGARTEN PLANNING**

Greenhouse offers various levels of support during the process of looking for a public or private school kindergarten, which includes a general information meeting and individual meetings with the director.

# **COLUMBIA GREENHOUSE NURSERY SCHOOL**

## **2011/2012 Personnel**

### **Administrative Staff**

Director	Vicki Aspenberg
Administrative Assistant	Vera Elumn
Office Assistant	Kira Rutherford-Boese

### **Faculty**

2 DAY/2's, 3 DAY/2's And 2's Afternoon	Rachel Silberman Angela Coulibaly Nina Basescu
2/3's and 3's Afternoon	Pamela Butler Cathleen Perez Theresa Swink
3's	Arlene Carter Heather Guerrier Alissa Quinones
3/4's	Paula Doerfel Lisa Orr-Chambliss Erica Maldonado
4/5's	Margaret Williams Xiomara Menendez Nexhmiye Avoricani Elizabeth Baliff

### **Support Staff**

Consulting Child Psychologist	Lorraine Harner
Music Specialist	Colleen Itzen
Maintenance	Ali Coulibaly

# **COLUMBIA GREENHOUSE NURSERY SCHOOL**

**2011/2012**

## **Board of Trustees**

Chairperson - Sara Edlin  
Vice Chair - Stan Monk  
Secretary - Caroline Clauss-Ehlers  
Treasurer - Sandra Kavangh  
At Large - David Duttonhofer  
At Large - Nicole Gordon  
Educator - Patricia Pell  
PA Rep - Brent Stockwell  
Director - Vicki Aspenberg  
Ex officio - Carol Hoffman

## **Parent Association**

Co-chairperson - Brent Stockwell  
Co-chairperson - Sarah Cornog  
Co-chairperson - Julie Kim  
Secretary - Stephanie Schafer

## **Contact Information**

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Vera's email: [velumn@columbiagreenhouse.com](mailto:velumn@columbiagreenhouse.com)

**Website: [www.columbiagreenhouse.com](http://www.columbiagreenhouse.com)**

**FEDERAL TAX ID# 13-3194659**