



Monthly Update from Gabriela ~ August 2017

Welcome Back to School!

We are ready and excited to welcome the children and families for the 2017-2018 school year.

Our entire team has been busy preparing to begin a new school year with a great deal of enthusiasm! The new group of educators (see below), spent a week in orientation with Candace and I, while Ms. Qiana and Melissa focused on wrapping up Summer Camp.



Over the weekend, we gathered at Sweetwater Creek State Park for our annual staff Retreat. We immersed ourselves in nature to seek inspiration from the natural world. The presence of educators' children during the retreat truly enhanced our experience. Their inquisitive disposition is very inspiring and motivating.

As life-long learners and teacher researchers we value and cherish these opportunities to increase our own awareness and sensitivities to the world around us and what potential there is for learning when aspects of our world encounters/is interpreted by the hundred languages.

We spent time getting to know each other and making plans for this new school year. We have decided to continue with our focus on the natural world, and we re-phrased our research question.

What are the processes children devise to interpret the interconnectedness to the natural world?

We are looking forward to rich experiences and on-going collaboration!

Meet the 2017-2018 GPCP Team

There is a wonderful group of people who have been working hard to prepare for the new school year with your children. We are looking forward to sharing their talents and experiences.

Operations Team

Executive Director: Gabriela Garcia

Assistant Director: Qiana Suggs

Operations Manager: Liza Dickerson

Administrative Assistant: Melissa Freeman

Pedagogista and Summer Camp Coordinator: Candace Dupree

Enrichment Educators

Spanish: Clara Castillo

Music: Ms. Mel Sebel

Grant Park Campus

Atelierista: Belinda Parra

Naturalist/Farm to School Coordinator: Taylor Mead

Cats Class: Brittany Gondolfi & Jamely Vasquez

Ladybugs Class: Claritza Castillo & Irina Johnston

Swans Class: Natalie Rosbottom, Liz Lootens and Esther Chambers

Extended Day: Clara Castillo, Claritza Castillo, Jamely Vasquez and Mary Parsell

Cabbagetown Campus

Naturalist/Farm to School Coordinator: Ina Musgrove

Cats Class: Shannon Johnson & Atai Nail

Ladybugs Class: Tiffany Atkinson & Chelsea Owen

Frogs Class: Candace Peterson, Amanda Atwell and Nathaniel Cruz-Lindsay

Extended Day: Payton Kornder, Atai Nail, Chelsea Owen and Nathaniel Cruz-Lindsay

Our Supporting Educators

Sarah Thorsen

Martha Hutchins

Patrice Daniels

Sarah Stover

Kelly Chavez

Payton Kornder

Welcome our new Educators!



Brittany Gondolfi: I was born and raised in and around New Orleans Louisiana. I graduated from Loyola University New Orleans with a Philosophy degree in May of 2015 after taking a 3 year break from college for travel and work. In the Summer 2013 I had a life changing event when I met a small group of neighbors concerned with turning an abandoned school in their neighborhood into a free neighborhood university. I threw myself into the project and after two years of learning about the power of education and community, the project epically failed with the school being sold to a private school that would not be accessible to the neighborhood. I was crushed, but my passion for restorative justice and community based education was forever

ignited. Along the way, I had the opportunity to meet people who believed that education and redefining the purpose of the American classroom were critical keys to turn humanity's doomsday trajectory around. Since those encounters I have been fully dedicated to investigating how to create the most empathetic, inspiring, nurturing environment for fostering the love of learning in all of us. I have worked as a time traveling "editor-not-in-chief" at The New School of Atlanta working with students on a futuristic newspaper that predicts, "Utopia in on the horizon!". I also facilitate a cross cultural exchange program between The New School and Native American students on the west coast with the Bioneers organization. I am a certified dive master, musician, seamstress, lover of all plants and animals, and most importantly have a wonderful baby daughter who is my everything. I cannot wait to make every year at GPCP a little more magical than the last.



Irina Johnston: Irina Johnston has a lifelong love of education and has been working with children on and off for 20 years. In 2010 she began to pursue a degree in early childhood education and quickly found herself falling in love with many subjects of her education. Irina earned an A.A. in English from Georgia Perimeter College and a B.S. in Anthropology from Kennesaw State University. While studying Anthropology, Irina found herself often drawn back to teaching. While on an archaeological dig in Panchmata India, Irina taught Oral History collection to graduate students from Pune College and found this to be one of the most rewarding experiences of her life. For the past year Irina has worked as a substitute teacher at a Montessori school and found herself loving aspects of the pedagogy, while craving a more creative approach to

her teaching. She is excited to become a part of the Grant Park Cooperative Preschool community and looks forward to all she can learn and share in the coming year.



Atai Nail: I have been taking care of children for quite a while and it is exhilarating to be able to actually work with them. I cannot express the joy I feel when acting with young children. What sold me to GPCP was the special way the children are treated. They are free thinkers and deserve to be given the chance to expound on their thoughts. In the future, I plan to create and self-animate my own cartoon series that will air on Cartoon Network or another station for children. The Savannah College of Art and Design has given me the stepping stones I needed to be able to accomplish this task. I will be the Cats class educator at the cabbage town campus for the 2017-2018 school year and I can't wait to get to work!



Chelsea Owens: I was born and raised in west Texas, and am a new Georgia resident. I have a bachelor's degree in Child and Family Studies, Edu. from The University of Texas of the Permian Basin where I graduated Cum Laude. This is the start of my seventh year teaching in early childhood. Family systems development and early childhood education are my passion and is a field I am continuously growing in.

I have a pet Holland Lop named Chloe and in my free time I enjoy live jazz music, film noir, breakfast foods, petrology, and reading.



Payton Kornder: The 2017 school year will be my first full year at Grant Park Cooperative Preschool, though I've worked with children since my freshman year of high school. I'm originally from Decatur, so throughout high school I was able to study in the Frasier Center Lab School, which is attached to Decatur High School. My senior year I was in the classroom nearly every day with children ranging from infants to five years of age. This was my first professional experience with childcare, and it encouraged me to major in early childhood education at Georgia College and State University. I spent my freshman year there, but this year I am taking a gap year to work

and gain experience before returning for the 2018 school year. I'm incredibly excited to be a part of such an involved community, and look forward to work in this unique environment.



Jamely Vasquez: I am originally from Manhattan New York, and I recently moved from Miami Florida, a great vacation spot to consider as a second home. Since the age of twelve I have been babysitting my siblings with lots of love and guidance and that is when providing care for children begun to be a hobby. During freshman year of high school I decided to further my learning into working with children so that I was able to get more of an understanding about early childhood education. I'm ambitious, focused and passionate about what I do. Working with children is fulfilling and I look forward to learning more about the GPCP ways of working with young children.

CALENDAR

Thursday, August 10th: Back to School Night – 6:30 to 9:00pm - starts at GP Campus

Friday, August 11th: Classrooms visitations – 4:00 to 5:00pm

Saturday, August 12th: workday at both campuses

Monday, August 14th: First day of School

Monday, September 4th: NO SCHOOL, Labor Day