

Dharma Garden Council – Mandate, Responsibilities, Composition, Process & Relationships to Other Councils

Dharma Garden Council Mandate

The Dharma Garden Council oversees all programs of the Dharma Garden. These include Dharma School, Dharma Camp, Frog Song Montessori Preschool, Childcare and Parent classes. The primary focus of these programs is to support children and families: their spiritual development, well-being and growth; and to encourage and support young people's inherent Buddha nature through community, compassion, sharing and joy. The Council cultivates these programs to support a vibrant and thriving broader Dharma Rain Sangha by offering to people of all ages a way into dharma and practice.

Dharma Garden seeks to express and cultivate the values of compassion, loving-kindness and connection.

Dharma Garden Council Responsibilities

1. Stewardship – The Council holds stewardship over programs developed to serve the children and families of the Dharma Rain sangha and those who register their children for DRZC programs, including:

- *Sunday Dharma School*: bi-weekly classes for children from pre-school through high school aiming to cultivate and nurture the emotional intelligence, social skills and spiritual growth of children.
- *Childcare*: Trained and supervised childcare for sangha members during some zazen and temple services.
- *Parent/Guardian Support and Education*: structured bi-weekly classes on parenting as Buddhist practice utilizing formal curriculum combined with informal exchange and information. To help families meet and cultivate their spiritual needs the program also provides:
 - zazen talks specifically designed to address concerns of parents and families
 - support to sangha parents in cultivating their own practice within the center and within their families
- *Dharma Camp*: designed for campers ages 9-18 to learn about themselves and to practice interdependence through a combination of traditional summer camp activities and Buddhist practice. The week of camp includes periods that are formal and structured as well as periods that are expressly informal.
- *Frog Song Montessori Preschool*: A comprehensive early learning environment for 3-5 year olds using a Montessori methodology based in lessons in compassion, mindfulness, kindness and environmental stewardship.

2. Oversight – The Council appoints and/or selects all staff for programs under its mandate.

- Assures staff compliance with all rules and regulations pertaining to children's well-being and safety including background checks for all individuals under the Dharma Garden Council's mandate, including Council members themselves. In addition works with the board and other councils as appropriate to assure and maintain compliance with fiduciary, ethical and legal requirements.
- Administers, oversees, and facilitates staff development and training for all programs as necessary. Approves all internal program budgets and assures implementation of necessary and appropriate policies for all programs under its mandate.
- Coordinates relationships between staff and teachers in support of dharma expression in curriculum development and practice. Cultivates and supports relationships between families and kids.
- Some form of explicit mentoring from a senior teacher will be available to all Dharma Garden teachers to cultivate dharma practice and understanding. There will be at least one formal check-in per year between Dharma Garden teachers and appointed committee member or a senior teacher.

Dharma Garden Council Composition

The council is made up of between 5 and 9 members with membership including at least one lay disciple, one transmitted teacher, one dharma school teacher (or former, within the last 5 years), one parent and one student, (or former, both within the last 5 years). Chair will be elected by current committee members and hold the position for no more than two consecutive years. The Dharma Garden Council determines the eligibility of and nominates its own successors, though nominees may be suggested by any Sangha member at any time.

Dharma Garden Council Process

- The Council will hold regularly scheduled monthly meetings, or at least 10 times per year. Additional meetings may be held as needed at the request of any committee member and discretion of chair. Any concerns may be brought to the committee in writing or person. Minutes will be published online.
- Decisions will be made by consensus. When consensus cannot be achieved, a vote by majority will be taken.
- A pool of candidates for Dharma School teachers and camp counselors will be drawn up by the Council with input from the Dharma Council. Candidates will have been members in good standing for at least 2 years, and have demonstrated maturity of practice in the center. The Dharma Garden Council will make final appointments, Dharma teachers of candidates and/or abbots may be asked for input when a teaching relationship or other leadership position exists or has existed in the last 5 years. Individuals with a criminal history will not be eligible for consideration.
- In the selection process for teachers/camp counselors, extra time and consideration will be given to the candidate selection process to assure candidate's compatibility with Dharma Garden mission, values and vision. Candidates will then be asked to review and

agree to uphold the council's mandate and all policies related to teaching including mandated reporting requirements. Teachers/camp counselors are required to attend all relevant trainings and staff development including those related to these policies. The Dharma Garden council will determine candidates for both counselors and teachers by vote.

Relationship of Dharma Garden Council to Other Councils

- The Dharma Garden Council reports to the Board of Directors on a yearly basis and consults with the Board of Directors on all matters of budgets, fees, liability issues, and abuse reporting policies and procedures.
- The Dharma Garden Council may enlist the advice and/ or recommendations of other Councils as needed for planning or programming purposes.