

# HeartSong

## Canto del Corazón

A Community of Free Learners

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Community of Free Learners



**HeartSong is an innovative school opening in Heredia, Costa Rica for children ages 4-18. Currently accepting children ages 7-13.**

We believe it is time to create the experiential and relaxed learning environment our children deserve in Heredia, a collaborative community in which we joyfully cultivate the confidence, creativity, skills and resilience to prosper in a





changing world.

**Mission:** To provide fertile ground for each child to unfold their internal plan in a loving community of free learners.

**Vision:** To restore faith in our natural development as human beings at each stage in life, trusting our inner compass to guide and create ourselves, transforming our world.

## PHILOSOPHY

We Believe:

- Each child comes into this world whole and complete, with unique talents and gifts to share with their community and the world.
- Like a seed, each child contains an internal plan for his/her development.
- Authentic learning unfolds from the inside out through self-discovery and exploration.
- Children are naturally curious, creative, and playful, and possess an innate love of learning.
- When children are provided an atmosphere of love and freedom where their autonomy and natural development is respected, learning happens naturally and joyfully.

## METHODOLOGY

Our job is to protect and nurture the innate creative genius in each child. We do this by creating prepared environments to activate their natural desire to learn and allowing them to fully connect with themselves and their learning community. By removing judgement from the learning process, we allow each child to

follow her/his internal teacher and meet their developmental needs. No homework. No grades. No exams. Instead, we observe and document the learning process. Each child creates her/his own learning portfolio and HeartSong staff keep a running pedagogical report that is shared with parents. Children follow their interests, develop their talents, and direct their own learning in a relaxed atmosphere of unconditional love.



### **Pedagogical Influences**

We incorporate best practices from the following:

- Montessori-inspired prepared environments
- Reggio Emilia-inspired provocations and documentation
- Summerhill/Democratic Free School-inspired governance

### **Self-Governance**

Adult staff and children work together as equals through a weekly council:

- Creating living agreements
- Solving problems and resolving conflicts
- Practicing deep listening and consensus building
- Taking personal and collective responsibility
- Engaging in conscious communication (Non-Violent Communication)
- Expressing their voices and perspectives
- Feeling empowered to create and affect their own reality

\*Inspired by Summerhill's pioneering self-governance model and the way it is put into practice at Casa Sula and Sudbury Valley School:

<http://www.summerhillschool.co.uk/about.php>

<http://casasula.com/>

[www.sudval.org](http://www.sudval.org)

## **Personalized Learning**

Staff accompany and support each child's learning journey through small group and individual sessions, interacting together with prepared learning environments and dynamic didactic materials until each child reaches autonomy and eventually mastery of skills and concepts. This approach respects the developmental stages of each child.



## **Project-Based Academic Offerings**

For the first time in human history, vast quantities of information are instantaneously available on the internet. With so much information at our fingertips, focusing on rote memorization has become obsolete. Interdisciplinary, hands-on experiences bring learning to life and are more effective than copying and regurgitating information.

Learner-directed projects allow children to engage in a collaborative process to come up with an idea that sparks their interest, create a plan to bring their idea to life, and then implement that plan from start to finish. Children learn content and skills through lived experience that emphasizes interconnectedness rather than separation. This type of purposeful learning is the key to developing thriving, confident human beings who know how to create and define their own happiness.

## **Play-based Learning**

Play is an integral part of the essence of childhood. Neurological studies show that children have a developmental need to play. When children play, they are learning without any need for adult intervention or direction. Play with a purpose is also a very powerful tool to bring joy to learning and create lasting neural connections that inspire full attention and focused interest.

## **Nature Immersion**

We believe nature is the ultimate teacher. Children who spend time outdoors and in wilderness settings enjoy increased mental and physical health and an understanding of the natural world that cannot be obtained in a classroom or from a textbook. We believe that the ecological and spiritual crises we face today arise from an artificial sense of separation from nature. We see ourselves as a part of nature, rather than separate from it. This sense of interconnectedness inspires us to regenerate and protect the earth and all living things.



## **Freedom of Movement and Choice**

When children are given time to just be, their natural curiosity, interests, creativity and talents come alive. They tune into their own needs and feelings, building a healthy sense of self and autonomy. They naturally develop self-reliance and self-confidence because they actively experience themselves as directors of their own learning and see their talents put into action.

Out of respect for children's nature, they are not confined to desks, but instead have the freedom to move about as they please within developmentally appropriate boundaries and with respect for their safety and the safety of others. Scientific research shows that learning is a full body experience and that sensory experiences build neural networks.



### **Multi-age Groups**

Multi-age groups inspire a sense of community and reflect real life. The focus shifts away from competition and peer comparison to collaboration and celebrating the uniqueness of each individual as part of a caring family. Younger children find inspiration in observing the older children's accomplishments and older children find empowerment in assisting and guiding the

younger children. An atmosphere of empathy, appreciation, and acceptance arises more naturally in a mixed age setting.

### **Learner-Directed**

Children learn best when they feel personally connected to what they are learning. When children direct their own learning process, motivation is intrinsic and skill acquisition is profound and joyful. The desire to continually learn throughout life is sparked.

### **Dual Immersion (English/Spanish)**

HeartSong is a bilingual learning community employing dual immersion in English and Spanish. English will be the primary language. Our personalized learning approach will identify and assist each child in strengthening their language skills depending on their needs and background. Due to graduation requirements, English proficiency is required to enter at the high school level.

### **Life Skills**

At HeartSong we believe it is vital to integrate life skills into our offerings including:

- Growing and cooking nourishing organic food
- Carpentry & building
- Conflict resolution & Non-violent communication
- Nutrition & health
- Art, dance, music, theater
- Yoga & wellness
- Entrepreneurship

## PARENT COMMITMENT

Parents will attend one meeting/workshop each month to bridge the HeartSong experience with their family life and parenting. The schedule for these meetings will be sent out well in advance so families can coordinate their agendas and arrange childcare. We welcome all parents to contribute to HeartSong with their time, talents, and resources in accordance with their availability.



## CURRICULUM

HeartSong will use Global Village School *Whole Child, Healthy Planet* curriculum as a guide. GVS materials are designed to prepare students to be responsible, compassionate, and knowledgeable global citizens. The K-12 curriculum guides cover the core subjects and beyond in a way that engages students through a sense of enchantment, awe, and wonder as they explore art, music, nature, imagination, and story.

<https://www.globalvillageschool.org/curriculum.html>

## ACCREDITATION

HeartSong will pursue MEP (Ministry of Public Education) accreditation. Please keep in mind this is a process that takes time. All HeartSong children will be dual enrolled with the United States-based Global Village School (GVS) so they will be eligible to earn a grade completion certificate and Apostille that is accredited in the United States by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). We plan to open 9th grade of **High School** in August of 2019. Through GVS, HeartSong students will be eligible to earn a USA high school diploma upon graduation when completing 12th grade.

### **Global Village School**

Founded in 1999, Global Village School (GVS) offers a progressive, WASC accredited, customizable K-12 program for a personalized, engaging, and enlivening school experience. GVS provides Whole Child, Healthy Planet K8 curriculum guides that integrate peace, justice, and diversity studies with the core subjects. GVS is an international distance learning school with students from around the globe. HeartSong staff will submit portfolios and work samples throughout the year to GVS teachers in the United States who will review and assess each student for progress. GVS will be the official school of records. [www.globalvillageschool.org](http://www.globalvillageschool.org)

### **Western Association of Schools and Colleges**

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), is a world-renowned accrediting association and one of the six regional accrediting agencies in the United States. It works closely with the Office of Overseas Schools under the U.S. Department of State. A WASC accredited high school diploma opens up opportunities for HeartSong graduates to study at universities in the United States.



## **SCHEDULE (All ages)**

Monday - Friday 8:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Wednesdays\* 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

\*Subject to change.

## **2018-2019 SCHOOL FEES**

Please email us for more information [info@heartsongcr.org](mailto:info@heartsongcr.org)

### **Scholarships**

It is our vision for HeartSong to be inclusive and accessible to families of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Please join us in our fundraising efforts to make scholarships available as soon as possible.

### **Billing & Payment**

All fees are in US dollars. Payments can be made in US dollars or in colones at the official sell exchange rate of the Banco Central. Payments must be made via bank deposit or electronic deposit to the HeartSong account at the Banco Nacional. HeartSong does not accept checks, credit card or cash payment. Please email us for payment information.

### **Additional Fees**

Students must pay for additional fees such as special assessments required for admissions, field trips, HeartSong t-shirt for field trips, etc.

## **Q&A**

### **Does HeartSong have a uniform?**

At HeartSong we do not require uniforms. Children are encouraged to wear comfortable clothing of their choosing for outdoor and indoor activity. Be aware that their clothing will get dirty, stained, painted on, etc. We will have a HeartSong t-shirt for field trips and special occasions.

### **What if I want to move my child to another school?**

Global Village School grade completion certificates and HeartSong pedagogical reports and portfolios can be presented to your new school.

The GVS grade completion certificates can be apostilled (additional fee) and therefore legally authenticated. If moving to a public school, parents will be responsible for presenting these certificates and pedagogical reports to the MEP for validation. The new school may apply an entrance exam to assess the child's grade level prior to placement.

## AWKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to express our profound gratitude to the many individuals and organizations who have inspired us at different points along our journey towards the creation of HeartSong.

We are grateful to The Evergreen State College (Washington, USA) for showing us an example of interdisciplinary, learner-directed education at the university level. It is inspiring to know that there are a growing number of higher education institutions like Evergreen that align with our HeartSong philosophy and demonstrate learning can effectively happen at an advanced level without the need for exams and grading.

Thank you to LeapNow: Transforming Education (California, USA) for their contribution to experiential, hands-on and service-based learning, helping young people transition into adulthood through life-skills, internships, travel, and rites of passage.

A very special thanks to Shikshantar: The People's Institute for Rethinking Education and Development (Udaipur, India) for sparking a radical shift in our understanding of learning, self-rule, questioning the factory-school model and revaluing traditional knowledge while being a living example of a thriving, self-organizing learning community.

Our gratitude to Punta Mona Center for Regenerative Design and Botanical Studies and the Permaculture Design Certificate teachers and team for their support and mentorship of the HeartSong project.

A heartfelt thanks to Grupo Orion-Paradigmas Educativos and Casa Sula (San Mateo) for the opportunity to observe and participate in a love-infused, non-directive, relaxed, child-centered learning environment during our month-long internship. Having studied and committed to Summerhill and Sudbury schools' self-governance models, it was especially inspiring to see Casa Sula's practice of their weekly council. Grupo Orion's dedication to respecting each child's development and allowing them the freedom to listen to and follow their authentic selves is truly revolutionary. We are deeply grateful for Grupo Orion's generosity in sharing their profound vision, experience and knowledge with us.

A special thanks to True North for the opportunity to participate in their intensive professional development trainings. We are grateful for your generosity in sharing your expertise and innovation with us.

We are thankful for the guidance of the founders and directors of True North (Escazú) and Puedo School (Santa Teresa) as inspiring examples of personalized and project-based learning.

We are grateful for insight from the directors of Spiral Garden Unschool (Ciudad Colón), Little Monsters (Barrio Escalante) and Kabe International Academy (Uvita).

To all of you, we honor your pioneering spirit, dedication and courage as we collectively participate in creating a paradigm shift in education and authentic learning.

Thank you to our parents, families, mentors, and friends who have supported the project thus far.

\*\*\*More thorough acknowledgements will be on our website, coming soon!



## RESOURCES

La Educación Prohibida  
[www.educacionprohibida.com](http://www.educacionprohibida.com)

Reevo Red de Educación Alternativa  
<https://red.reevo.org/>

Shikshantar: The People's Institute for Rethinking Education & Development  
[www.swarajuniversity.org](http://www.swarajuniversity.org)  
[www.shikshantar.org](http://www.shikshantar.org)

### Recommended Reading

Albert, David H. *Dismantling the Inner School: Homeschooling & the Curriculum of Abundance*. Hunt Press, 2011.

Albert, David H. *Homeschooling and the Voyage of Self-Discovery: a Journey of Original Seeking*. Common Courage Press, 2003.

Bray, Barbara, and Kathleen McClaskey. *How to Personalize Learning: a Practical Guide for Getting Started and Going Deeper*. Corwin, 2017.

Coloroso, Barbara. *Kids Are Worth It!: Giving Your Child the Gift of Inner Discipline*. Collins Living, 2005.

Curtain, Helena, and Carol Ann Pesola. *Languages and Children, Making the Match: Foreign Language Instruction in the Elementary School*. Longman Publishing Group, 1994.

Danks, Sharon Gamson. *Asphalt to Ecosystems: Design Ideas for Schoolyard Transformation*. New Village Press, 2010.

Edwards, Carolyn P., et al. *The Hundred Languages of Children: the Reggio Emilia Experience in Transformation*. Praeger, 2012.

Greene, Ross W. *Raising Human Beings: Creating a Collaborative Partnership with Your Child*. Scribner, 2017.

Hannaford, Carla. *Smart Moves: Why Learning Is Not All In Your Head*. Great River Books, 2013.

Holt, John Caldwell. *How Children Learn*. Lifelong Books, 1995.

Kohn, Alfie. *Punished by Rewards: the Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other Bribes*. Houghton Mifflin Co., 2010.

Kohn, Alfie. *Unconditional Parenting: Moving from Rewards and Punishments to Love and Reason*. Atria Books, 2006.

Montessori, Maria. *The Absorbent Mind*. Stellar Editions, 2016.

Neill, Alexander Sutherland. *Summerhill: a Radical Approach to Education*. V. Gollancz, 1973.

Robinson, Ken, and Lou Aronica. *Creative Schools: the Grassroots Revolution That's Transforming Education*. Penguin Books, 2016.

Robinson, Ken, and Lou Aronica. *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*. Penguin, 2010.

Singer, Dorothy G, and Tracy A. Revenson. *A Piaget Primer: How a Child Thinks*. International Universities Press, Inc., 1998.

Sunderland, Margot. *The Science of Parenting: How Today's Brain Research Can Help You Raise Happy, Emotionally Balanced Children*. DK, 2016.

Tsabary, Shefali. *The Conscious Parent*. Yellow Kite, 2014.

Wheatley, Margaret J., and Deborah Frieze. *Walk out Walk on: a Learning Journey into Communities Daring to Live the Future Now*. Berrett-Koehler, 2011.