
Parent

Handbook

*Pre-Kindergarten and
Kindergarten*

2015-2016

Waldorf School of Orange County

Early Childhood Handbook

Statement of Philosophy, Purpose and Goals

We warmly welcome you to our school and look forward to a wonderful year. We regard your child's presence in our program as a blessing, and in all of our decisions as teachers, your child's needs are first in our thoughts. We hope the following information will help provide a harmonious transition between home and school in the weeks and year to come.

The Waldorf Kindergarten philosophy is based on the conviction that the young child learns by imitation and repetition of what is beautiful and meaningful. Each child's innate capacity for wonder, reverence and awe is valued and nurtured in a carefully planned program and environment. Learning is joyous because children are guided towards healthy, creative expression while they develop the foundation for future academic work.

Morning Arrival, Sign-in Procedure

Our school day begins at 8:30 a.m. An adult must sign in each child – this is a legal requirement. The adult is required to legibly sign their full name and note the arrival time each morning. It is also required on a daily basis for the adult to leave a phone number where he/she can be reached in case of emergency. If your child is ill please call the school office.

It is important that the children arrive ON TIME, as they have a difficult time working into the group when brought in late. Encourage your children to be responsible for their own belongings, putting them into cubbies, and putting on and tying their own shoes.

After you arrive, you can take a few minutes to help your child get comfortable and transition to school. For some children this is an easy transition. For others it is more difficult. Your child's teacher will work with you to discover what will work best. We do suggest that you keep your good-byes quick and simple. A long good-bye asks a child to meet a parental need. From a social attachment point of view, school marks the first partial separation from parents and the beginning of new attachments to other adults and peers.

Once you see your child safely into our care, we ask that you save any questions for us until pick up time (unless, of course, it is something that needs our immediate attention). This will allow us to focus on the children.

Afternoon Departure, Sign-out Procedure

Kindergarten classes end at 1:00 p.m. Children should be picked up promptly by 1:00 p.m. Please legibly sign-out your child each day before departing. The big Kindergarten playground will not be available after school. If there is some reason you are unable to pick up your child, please let the teacher know at drop-off or phone the office. It eases an anxious child to know when to expect you. The Grades play yard is off-limits, please be respectful of classes in session.

Daily Rhythm (or Schedule)

Each class will have variations in the daily schedule. Activities will differ from class to class, just as curriculum content will change as your child's teacher "reads" the needs of her class through observation. However, the basic components remain the same, regardless of day or time. Please feel free to speak to your child's teacher regarding the order of the day in his/her class. A brief description of each component of the day follows, giving a more concrete picture of what your child is learning, which skills he/she is mastering and just what your child is talking about when you hear, "We did it at circle time!"

Emotional development occurs as children express their joy, fear, anger or happiness, and experience the responses from their peers.

Social development takes place with sharing, taking turns, responding to rules at school in differentiation from family rules, and doing what is considered proper for their role in their play. Children make friends through dramatic play, learning to give and take in a social group.

Physical development is enhanced as the children shift and move about the heavy objects during their play. 1

Creative development is fostered as children evolve; they plan and work out solutions to the action that is taking place. Each episode is new and interesting to the children.

Teachers can facilitate play through indirect guidance; that is through the stories, planning and organizing the materials and equipment, and through their direct physical or verbal guidance.

Circle Time

In the morning the children come together as a class and hold hands to form a circle. We sing a song or recite a verse to welcome the new day followed by movement and games orchestrated with song and verse consistent with a theme related either to the season, a festival or a story.

The rhythmic circle movements support the development of balance, body coordination, hand-eye coordination and gross motor skills. The repetition of verses, rhymes and songs lays the foundation for word association in reading and develops memory. Singing teaches rhythm, melody and harmony, as well as an appreciation of music. All of circle supports cognitive, physical and social development.

Guided Creative Play

Play is a child's work and becomes part of a foundation for learning and life. It is the cornerstone of learning, the opportunity for children to venture forth and investigate or test their ideas and the world as they imitate what they see. It helps fulfill a number of goals for children as they develop.

Cognitive development is enhanced through play. As children play out roles, they learn to make decisions such as what to wear, which house to live in, and which group to join. In addition, they are putting order to their space and collecting the supplies needed for their plan. Children learn by asking their own next question and trying out the answers. Often both the questions and the answers take the form of actions rather than words. Children learn by doing.

Activities

Throughout the year the children will experience a wide variety of activities and crafts. On a weekly basis they will cook, bake bread, sculpt with beeswax, color or draw with crayons of rich colors and paint with watercolor paints on wet paper. We believe that by providing the children with these activities using a variety of natural products and tools, we will help them maintain their connection to the natural world as they expand their imagination, enhance their fine motor skills and cognitive development.

Snack

Several ideas guide our planning of the daily snack. Among them is that the food be wholesome and nutritious, the children be able to participate in the preparation, that there be a rhythmic order in what we serve during the week, and that, as much as possible, we avoid foods that children are allergic to. It is amazing to see that in the beginning of the school year, children think they don't like what we are having, but before long we are preparing larger quantities as more and more of them want second helpings! As the year progresses, we have lots of requests to tell mom how to make it!

As in all areas of the Early Childhood program, snack time is approached in a mood of reverence. In keeping with this mood, the table is set with placemats, napkins, spoons, bowls and perhaps a vase of flowers. This creates an atmosphere conducive to appropriate table manners, conversation and the experience of remaining at the table until excused. In the same vein, it is important that this time be concluded in an orderly fashion. Each child helps by clearing his/her place and washing their dishes.

The snack schedule is posted on the bulletin board at the entrance of each classroom. Water is served with each snack.

Outside Time:

The schedule of our day is structured to include forty-five minutes to an hour of outside time, in order to provide opportunity for a variety of healthy movements. Children enjoy walking, running, swinging, climbing, jumping, sand and water play, gardening and building. The classes schedule different outside times allowing each class adequate space to move freely as well as opportunity to intermingle. We are fortunate that our campus offers direct access to a Nature Preserve giving the children the opportunity to take nature walks.

Story

Children look forward to this special time of day. A verse is said and a song sung before the story. This helps the children settle and creates a mood of quiet reverence. The story is a fairytale, a folk tale, or a nature story, and often relates to the season or a festival. The teacher chooses the stories according to what is appropriate for the particular group of children. The same story is often told for up to three weeks, connecting with the forces of rhythm and working on a soul level. The three weeks may include a puppet show and/or a dramatization of the story by the children. Stories often emerge in the children's play or you may hear it retold or played out at home. (Please do not ask the children to retell the story. It is wonderful soul food for the children when we allow it to live in them as nourishment, each in their own way.)

Lunch

“Earth who gives to us this food,
Sun who makes it ripe and good,
Sun above and earth below, our
Loving thanks to you we show.”

Or

“Dear Earth, dear sun, by you we live
To you our loving thanks we give.”

An atmosphere of love and gratitude for the bounty of nature prevails at our lunch table. Small placemats and napkins, packed in the basket from home, are carefully placed on the tables. Children are helped to unpack, if they require it, and are encouraged to practice their skills by peeling their citrus fruit themselves, etc. Then, when everyone is ready to begin, a verse similar to that above is said or sung. Conversation or quiet is encouraged, depending on the needs of the group. Good table manners are also encouraged.

A young child's food should be a source of enjoyment as well as nourishment. At snack time, we serve natural and whole foods in a pleasant and orderly atmosphere. We do hope that parents will avoid serving “junk” foods, empty calorie foods, and foods containing artificial additives and dyes, as there is increasing evidence that these can be harmful. We recognize that the basis for physical well-being is laid during the child's early years, and we believe it is the responsibility of the adult to be conscious of nurturing this well-being.

We would prefer lunches to arrive from home in baskets, cloth sacks, or backpacks free of slogans or caricatures, and please include a cloth napkin and a placemat. If you plan to send your child's lunch in a basket, please note that the size of the “cubby” in your child's classroom.

Children enjoy making their own sandwiches at home the night before, but are often inclined to overload baskets with snack type foods. Please, keep it as simple as possible. And of course, candies, cakes, cookies and juices, etc., are not acceptable. Please include water, as opposed to juice or sports drinks.

Walks

Walks to Fairview Park (fortunately adjacent to our campus) are part of our weekly rhythm and are a very healthy experience for the children. A “Fairview Park Field Trip Release” was included for your review and signature in your registration packet. It states you are aware your child's class will take regular walks to Fairview Park or the Talbert Ecological Preserve. These excursions can occur during the course of the school day without notice to the parent/guardian. The release states you have advised the class teacher of any known allergic reaction to bee/insect stings, pollen or plants.

Quiet Time

We believe that having spent such a busy morning at school, each child really needs some time at the end of the day to relax physically from the mornings exertions and to relax mentally, taking time to reflect and daydream in a quiet atmosphere. This is NOT a naptime. Some children may sleep, their bodies needing it; others may lie down quietly, the parent reading a story or singing a song or playing some music. An option for older ones may be to look at a book, work on a puzzle, or draw and color, if they really cannot settle down.

Falling asleep in the car and considering it as a rest time is not a suitable alternative. We sometimes hear from parents that if the child sleeps during the day he will not go to bed on time; further discussion with the parent reveals that the child has a difficult time behaving in the afternoon, and BOTH parent and child could

go to bed at 7:30! An option may be to consider implementing a quiet time, giving both parent and child a “break”, allowing the child to get himself together mentally and physically and creating more “balance” in the day, so the child can face the afternoon’s activity. A healthy tiredness is just that – HEALTHY. Exhaustion and overtiredness should be avoided at all costs.

Illness Policy

Control of communicable illness among the children is an important responsibility. Policies and guidelines related to outbreaks of communicable illness have been developed with the help of information from the health department and local pediatricians. In order to protect the entire group of children, as well as your own child, we ask that you keep sick children at home if they have experienced any of the following symptoms within the past 24 hours:

- A fever over 100 F (37.8 C) orally
- Signs of a newly developing cold or uncontrollable coughing
- Diarrhea, vomiting, or an upset stomach
- Unusual or unexpected loss of appetite, fatigue, irritability, or headache
- Any discharge or drainage from eyes, nose, ears, or open sores

Children who become ill with any of these symptoms will be returned home. We appreciate your cooperation with this policy. If you have any questions about whether or not your child is well enough to attend school, please call the office *before* bringing your child.

After an illness, children often appear healthy in the morning but are still not up to the vigorous activity we offer. Please allow your child at least one full day of rest after an illness. A child should not return to school until 24 hours after vomiting or fever. If your child is ill or will be absent for any other reason, please call the school office.

Discipline

As each child is a unique being and therefore has individual needs, we strive to approach discipline from many directions. To begin with we must have established boundaries, for the safety of the child and class.

Children are living in their will. At this age children find it difficult to control their will forces, which is why they will run, climb and skip with seemingly inexhaustible energy. They will also hit, kick and behave in a manner which we adults perceive as inappropriate. In fact, it is all a natural part of being a young child and development. We must find ways to channel this movement into appropriate behavior and maintain the boundaries, to support appropriate develop and behavior.

One way, is to redirect the child’s energy from a destructive or potentially dangerous activity to that of a creative, imaginative or positive one. Children respond well to redirection and positive phraseology. For example: a child is throwing rocks. We may say, “I can see you enjoy throwing. Rocks belong on the ground so let’s go find a ball”.

Another method used is problem solving. Direct conflict between two children may be handled by offering the children an opportunity to solve the problem themselves with teacher’s guidance.

Through observation a teacher will get to know your child and if a particular pattern of negative behavior is reoccurring she will contact the parent. At times a child will need a time apart. He/she will be removed from the group and given a calming activity until the child feels capable of rejoining. If a teacher finds that the child may benefit from a day away from school, the teacher will have a conversation with the parents first. If the behavior continues or is more serious, a student may be suspended without prior contact with parents. Suspension is a period in which the student is not allowed to come to school. A teacher may immediately suspend a student by sending the student home or by giving a suspension up to one day in length. Suspension for a period longer than one day must be approved by the College of Teachers.

Bad language is not acceptable. Children repeat what they hear. Language is so spontaneous; it comes from deep within. It is probably the hardest behavior to change and the one which spreads the most quickly amongst children. Parents are responsible for the child’s language. If a pattern of bad language persists, we will ask that the child be kept home until such behavior has changed. We realize this may be inconvenient but consider the detrimental effect to the whole class when bad language takes hold.

In accordance with California Code of Regulations, Title 22, any form of discipline or punishment that violates a child's personal rights is not permitted regardless of authorized representative consent or authorization.

Clothing

We try to provide as beautiful and tranquil an environment as we can, and so we ask that you send your child to school in clothing free of slogans, cartoons and caricatures. Likewise, camouflage, cowboy boots and baseball caps of all types are best left at home. This helps the children to freely self-select their play themes without the influence from media via clothing. Sun hats, however, are encouraged.

The Kindergarten is a place of active work and play, where sometimes over an hour is spent outdoors. Because of this, spare clothing is a must. The following is a list of the things we would like your child to have at school.

1. Indoor shoes, which the children change into for inside play, need to be closed, light, soft sole shoe or moccasin. Children need to be able to skip without the shoes coming off. Because of fire drills, we can't have socks or slipper socks, etc.
2. Spare clothing consists of: one pair of socks, two pairs of underwear, a shirt, a pair of pants, and a sweatshirt or sweater. All of these items should be labeled clearly and placed in a zip-lock bag with the child's name on it. Please remember to replace anything brought home.
3. Please have the girls wear a pair of shorts under their dresses or skirts.
4. Once rain sets in, please make available for school a pair of rubber boots and a hooded jacket or raincoat and rain pants.
5. We ask that no playthings be brought from home. If a toy is lost or broken, it can be very upsetting to the child concerned. Jewelry, make-up, nail polish and tattoos should stay at home.

Television and Media

Childhood is a time for learning through activity, experiencing the wonders of nature, growing socially, playing creatively and imaginatively, singing, talking, running, laughing, and even crying. The activities of childhood should allow no time for television, computer or video games.

There are clearly many undesirable effects of media upon children and they are often clearly seen: uneasiness, lack of attention span, inappropriate acting-out, and aggressive behavior.

Perhaps the greatest loss is the dimming effect it has upon the imagination, It is the imagination that provides the foundation for learning and growth. According to Beginning and Beyond, Foundations in Early Childhood Education, the 1998 Nielson Report on Television commented on basic concerns about children and media, including that it "promotes passivity, slowing intellectual and stifling imagination."

WE ASK THAT NO TELEVISION, MOVIES OR COMPUTER GAMES BE WATCHED OR USED.

Parent Meetings

Each class teacher will hold parent meetings during the year. These provide an opportunity for you to learn more about Waldorf education, child development, and to meet the other parents in your child's class. Individual Parent Conferences to discuss your child's school experience and development are scheduled in the winter. As well, if at any time you would like a conference with your child's teacher, please feel free to request it.

Children's Records

In accordance with California Code of Regulations, Title 22:

- A separate and current record for each child is maintained.
- All information and records obtained from or regarding children are confidential.
- All WSOC Early Childhood files are available to the Department of Social Services to inspect, audit and copy upon demand during normal business hours.

Immunization Requirements, Medical Assessment and T.B. Requirements

Included within the registration packet, each parent/guardian of children to be enrolled received a

“Physician’s Report” to be completed by the parent/guardian and the child’s physician. The physician indicates the general health and well-being of the child, along with noting any health problems of which the teacher should be aware including, but not limited to: hearing, vision, developmental, language/speech, the presence of asthma, and allergies to food, insect stings, or medicine. Prescribed or other medicines/treatments taken on a regular basis are also noted. It is required for us to be aware of each child’s immunization history, either by way of the Physician’s Report or a separate California

Immunization Record. In accordance with California state law we require a copy of your child’s vaccination card this includes a screening for T.B. Additionally, within the registration packet, each parent/guardian received and completed “Preadmission Health History – Parent’s Report.” Completing this form gives the teachers valuable information regarding the child’s health history including past illnesses, as well as the child’s daily routines.

Permission to Administer Medication

We will not administer any medication without a written prescription and without written authorization of a parent/guardian. Medications are substances used to prevent, diagnose, cure or relieve signs and symptoms of disease. The Education Code regulations for medication administration in school include over-the-counter products. The school must have a release form completed if the child is to receive medication during school hours. Without this documentation, the school is unable to dispense any medication. It is required that the child’s name be on the original container. Prescription medication is to be clearly labeled with the child’s name, physician’s name and phone number, the name of the medication, dosage and expiration date of the medication. No medication will be administered from anything other than the original container. Similarly, if two siblings require identical medication, they each need their own separate, original prescription or container with his/her name on it.

In accordance with California Code of Regulations, Title 22:

- Medications are kept inaccessible to children.
- Prescription medications must be administered in accordance with label directions as prescribed by the child’s physician.

Identification and Emergency Information and Action to Be Taken in Medical/Dental Emergency

The school requires current identification and emergency information to be on file for every child. It is imperative for the teachers to be able to reach the parent/guardian in case of emergency. In the circumstance the parent/guardian is not reachable, the “Identification and Emergency Information” form also requires a listing of additional persons who may be called in an emergency. In the case of a medical or dental emergency, we will contact the physician/dentist listed on the form. If the physician or dentist can not be reached, we will contact 911 or the emergency hospital as deemed appropriate, unless otherwise noted on the Emergency form. A copy of all emergency release forms are kept with the school files and a duplicate copy is kept in our disaster bin located on campus. It is imperative you keep your emergency release form current. **In the event of an emergency or disaster your child will only be released to those individuals you have identified in writing on that form as people who are authorized to take the child from the facility.**

Children’s and Parent’s Rights

Each child shall have the following rights which include, but are not limited to (Reference, California Code of Regulations, Title 22):

- To be accorded dignity in his/her personal relationships with staff and other persons.
- To be accorded safe, healthful and comfortable accommodations, furnishings and equipment to meet his/her needs.
- To be free from corporal or unusual punishment, infliction of pain, humiliation, intimidation, ridicule, coercion, threat, mental abuse, or other actions of a punitive nature, including but not limited to: interference with daily living functions, including eating, sleeping, or toileting; or withholding of shelter, clothing, medication or aids to physical functioning.
- To be informed, and to have his/her authorized representative, if any, informed by the licensee of the provisions of law regarding complaints including, but not limited to, the address and telephone number of the complaint receiving unit of the licensing agency and of information regarding

confidentiality.

- To be free to attend religious services or activities of his/her choice and to have visits from the spiritual advisor of his/her choice. Attendance at religious services, either in or outside the facility, shall be on a completely voluntary basis. In child care facilities, decisions
- Concerning attendance at religious services or visits from spiritual advisors shall be made by the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the child.
- Not to be locked in any room, building, or facility premises by day or night.
- Not to be placed in any restraining device, except a supportive restraint approved in advance by the licensing agency.

As a parent/authorized representative, you have the right to (Reference, California Code of Regulations, Title 22):

- Enter and inspect the child care center without advance notice whenever children are in care.
- File a complaint against the licensee with the licensing office and review the licensee's public file kept by the licensing office.
- Review reports of licensing visits and substantiated complaints against the licensee made during the last three years.
- Complain to the licensing office and inspect the child care center without discrimination or retaliation against you or your child.
- Request in writing that a parent not be allowed to visit your child or take your child from the child care center, provided you have shown a certified copy of a court order.
- Receive from the licensee the name, address and telephone number of the local licensing office:
Department of Social Services 714-703-2800
Community Care Licensing
Child Care Division
750 The City Drive, Ste 250
Orange, CA 92868
- Be informed by the licensee, upon request, of the name and type of association to the child care center for any adult who has been granted a criminal record exemption, and that the name of the person may also be obtained by contacting the local licensing office.
- Receive, from the licensee, the Caregiver Background Check Process form.

Note: California State Law provides that the licensee may deny access to the child care center to a parent/authorized representative if the behavior of the parent/authorized representative poses a risk to children in care.

General School Policies:

- The school shall be non-denominational
- The school shall be coeducational
- There shall be no school uniform
- There shall be individual assessment through observation
- There shall be no corporal punishment
- The school shall not discriminate against any student for any reason, and every effort shall be made to integrate a student within the school.

How Can Parents Best Support Teachers and the Classroom Experience?

As parents and teachers, we are joining together in special partnership for the growth and development of

your child. As partners, we need to be in close touch. You are the “eyes and ears” at home as we, the teachers, are the “eyes and ears” at school. We are not asking that you turn your home into a Waldorf school. The individual home lives are as essential to the children’s growth as the quality of education they receive at school. Here are a few ways of working together to support your child so he/she may reap the most benefit from his/her experience.

Learn about and embrace the principles of Waldorf education. Attend all class-held meetings regularly to find out what is going on in the classroom. Attend parent study groups and parent information meetings. Communicate with teachers regularly if you have concerns and when you like what is going on. Create a home environment that supports what is taking place at school, by encouraging children to play imaginatively and eliminating media exposure.

Make sure the children arrive for school on time and are properly dressed for the weather and activity. Volunteer to assist with special activities such as festivals, gardening and special crafts. Participate in the work day including painting, decorating, cleaning and moving. Inform the teacher if anything special is going on with your child such as or if he/she is going to be absent from school.