



Kindergarten Handbook

2006-2007

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Introduction

Each year as the summer draws to its close, an air of excitement surrounds the school. The doors of that wonderful kindergarten world are soon to open; the children have waited a long while and now it is time to begin.

The child's day is full of creative play – perhaps painting or baking, singing and a story. The content of kindergarten life thus has a simplicity and basic necessity that the child can understand and imitate whole-heartedly.

The activities of baking, painting, gardening, singing, circle, storytelling and puppetry captures the children's interest and enthusiasm for the world. This becomes the main-spring of later learning. Our work as Waldorf teachers is to nurture the physical development of the young child, while cultivating the positive human values of compassion, reverence for life, respect, cooperation, love of nature and other people, interest in the world and social conscience, as well as developing cognitive, artistic, and practical skills. The physical body is supported and the soul life of the child is affirmed and nourished as the ground for healthy, active thinking.

As teachers, we want to help create a bridge between the kindergarten and home, to bring together a harmonious meeting of the whole. We hope that this booklet will begin to build this connection by shedding light on the Waldorf kindergarten and how we look at our work with the children. More than anything else, we want you to feel that we are always open to your questions or concerns and that through the school we may learn and grow as parents, teachers and children, together into a true community.

Welcome to Waldorf School of the Peninsula!

Carole Kowalski, Rose Kindergarten

Barbara Shields, Morning Glory Kindergarten

Hans Walser, Sunflower Kindergarten

Warming Day Items

Check with you child's teacher for items to bring on this day.

Rhythm in the Kindergarten

Our three kindergartens all have the same activities, though their order and rhythm may vary. These activities include going for walks, inside and outside creative play, circle time, snack, rest time, tidy-up time, and story time. A daily rhythm alternates carefully between expanding and contracting activities. Rhythm in the days of the week is established through the practical and artistic activities of bread baking, gardening, cooking, finger knitting, watercolor painting, woodworking, and other handwork and outdoor activities. The celebration of seasons and festivals mark the monthly rhythms.

For snack, we serve organic grains in addition to the bread and soup that we make. For holidays or festivals we may have special treats.

Additional events each month may include:

- Parent evenings, classroom activities, various lectures, and workshops (watch for the weekly *Messenger* notices).
- Seasonal celebrations and festivals (if you celebrate a special day and wish to bring this to the children, please let us know).



Kindergarten Hours 8:30 am – 12:30 pm

The Waldorf kindergarten morning begins at 8:30 am. Kindergarteners should arrive between 8:10 and 8:25 am and be dropped off according to the parking plan. A kindergarten assistant or teacher will meet the children in the upper play yard and guide them to their first morning activity. The children are in school for four hours and by 12:30 pm the kindergarten day comes to a close.

Aftercare

If your child is attending the afternoon program, we ask that you send a healthy lunch. Each child will also need to have a small cotton blanket for rest time. Kindergarten children will rest on nap mats that are easy to roll up and store. There will be a supplies fee of \$15.00, to pay for the mat and a drinking mug for your child. The children may bring in a small blanket that can easily be rolled up into the mat and they may also bring a small cuddle toy to rest with.

Kindergarten children going to aftercare will be picked up by an aftercare teacher in parking pick-up point and escorted to the aftercare room. We request that you pick up your child after 2:30 pm so the children may enjoy lunch and a rest time without disruptions. At 3:10 pm the kindergarteners will be joined by the grades children attending aftercare.

Sign-up, billing, and messages for the aftercare staff are handled through the office. The telephone number for aftercare is 650/948-6900.

Visiting the Classroom

Visitors are welcome when advance arrangements are made with the teachers and the school office. Visitors are given a task to perform while quietly joining the kindergarten morning. Visitors include parents, student teachers, teacher candidates, and people interested in Waldorf education.

Daily Necessities

Please strive to arrive on time, as late arrivals disrupt a very important moment of gathering. To report an absence, send a note or call the school office. The message will be passed to your child's teacher. It is very helpful for the teacher to know the reason and probable length of a child's absence.

Please complete the form in your enrollment packet indicating who is authorized to pick up your child. If, for any reason, someone other than the parent or authorized adult will be picking up your child please leave a message for the teacher or aftercare. Also, please inform the adult to bring identification at the time of pick-up to eliminate any confusion.

Morning Drop-Off and Afternoon Pick-up

- Kindergarten begins at 8:30 am and ends at 12:30 pm. The school day for grades two through eight begins at 8:30 am and ends at 3:00 pm everyday except Thursday. On Thursday school ends at 12:50 pm. After school care is available until 5:45 pm.
- Supervised drop-off begins at 8:10 am. Please do not leave your child any earlier, because without staff supervision we cannot guarantee the children's safety. Limited on-site parking and no off-site parking necessitate curbside drop-off and pick-up on school days. Please plan to drop-off your children between 8:10 and 8:25 am.
- Kindergarten pick-up is at 12:30 pm. The kindergarten child must be picked up from the designated parking lanes by a parent or authorized adult. Please alert your carpool driver of this arrangement.
- If you need to pick up and install a car seat, plan to arrive between 12:20 and 12:25. Children who are not picked up by 12:45 pm will be signed into aftercare, with a one-hour minimum charge. Drop-in aftercare is not available. A reservation must be made 24 hours in advance if after school care is required for children who do not have a regular aftercare arrangement.
- Please read the school's traffic and parking procedure carefully and check with your child's teacher if you are not clear about the procedures.

Dress

In choosing school clothes and helping your child get ready in the morning, select clothing that is:

- Easy to move in (run, climb, crawl) and to loosen for the bathroom
- Able to withstand dirt, grass, mud, water, paint (not too dressy)
- Layered for warmth and changeable weather
- Made from natural fibers for comfort
- Free from fashion consciousness (which is not appropriate at this age)
- No fingernail polish or press-on tattoos
- Preferably of solid colors or soft prints and pastels, and free from advertisements or media characters, camouflage, and letters (including Waldorf logos)
- Identified with name tags on sweaters, jackets, etc.

Include a hat for outside wear, to provide protection from sun or cold. For outdoor play please provide well fitting, sturdy shoes (with no wheels, blinking lights or sounds!). Also include rainwear, with name labels, whenever the clouds hint of rain.

Each child has a cubby where extra clothes, coats, shoes, etc. are kept. Please check your child's cubby regularly for things that can be taken home. Please keep your child's toys at home. The teacher is responsible for engaging the children actively and creatively during school time. Please check with your child's teacher before sending items that are not necessary. When items from home are lost at school, children often feel anxious and sad.

You may hear Waldorf kindergarten teachers talk about keeping children warm enough. This comes from an understanding that the young child is just developing the ability to balance the opposing forces of heat and cold. With this balance comes our most harmonious mental and physical activity. Well-known kindergarten teacher, Margret Meyerkort, points out that "the human being is born without physical protection, so he begins his earthly path in a most vulnerable position, dependent on the caring concern of others." Meyerkort suggests that erring on the side of overdressing is better than allowing the warmth to stream out through the sensitive points of the head, hands, and feet.

Communication

Good, open communication is a key element in the success of Waldorf education. To facilitate good communication, the program includes:

- Parent-teacher conference times scheduled throughout the year, and telephone conversations by arrangement with the teacher whenever needed
- The school's weekly newsletter, *Messenger*, is sent home once a week, e-mailed and is available on-line
- Limited exchanges of information about illness, little sleep, disposition, etc. sent via a note (perhaps pinned to the child's coat) at drop off in the morning (saving longer conversations for conference times).

Parents are expected to attend parent meetings, work with the teacher as concerns or issues arise, and communicate about challenging situations in the child's life. Please talk *first* to your child's teacher if you have classroom-related questions, problems, or concern. If more help is desired, the next step is to contact the teacher's mentor. Please read the Parent Handbook for a more detailed review of communication procedures.

Health

Your child's health is important to us all. Each morning we pay special attention to how each child is doing. We are not equipped to care for sick children, and if your child develops symptoms of illness during the day, we will isolate him or her from the class and contact you immediately.

Please keep your child at home if he or she has:

- A fever, or has had one during the previous 24 hours
- Heavy nasal discharge
- A constant cough
- Vomiting
- Symptoms associated with a communicable disease – reddened eyes, sore throat, headache, abdominal pain, fever
- Impetigo
- Chicken pox
- Head lice
- Pinworms

If your child develops a communicable disease, please notify us at once. We will then send out a form to alert the other families in the class. If a child shows any communicable disease symptoms during school, we will phone his/her parents.

The teacher will contact parents if, in his/her opinion, the child is unable to participate fully in a normal day, whether due to illness, fatigue, or unusual distress. Children in kindergarten should be kept home if they are not completely well and rested.

Remember it is important to eat a healthy, protein-based breakfast before coming to school.



Creative Discipline in the Kindergarten

As teachers we guide behavior in a gentle, non-threatening, yet effective manner. We carefully structure the environment and daily rhythm. When disruptions or conflicts occur, we use creative images, characters, stories, and humor to re-direct play, regroup children in their play, and give them a special role involving their cooperation.

Children will be sent home for biting, pinching, kicking, or tantrums. If your child is having difficulty with aggressive behaviors, please confer with your teacher before an incident occurs to establish consistent methods of discipline both at home and at school.

“The young child instinctively expects guidance. Without the certainty of his parents and teachers he loses his security...Constantly being asked what he wants creates bewilderment in his mind...Instead we must develop consciousness and consciously meet the child’s paramount needs. They are easily stated: security and an awareness of growth, love and a certain amount of protection...The conscientious and conscious parent will have to play an active and positive role in the education, the leading forth of his child...Lead the child by conveying firmness permeated with love.”

Margret Meyerkort, internationally respected kindergarten educator

Festivals

The celebration of festivals acknowledging the cycle of the year lies at the heart of the Waldorf kindergarten. Children experience festivals not only as special days, but as a season for which there is time for preparation, a time for letting go. Because young children live so fully into the world that surrounds them, kindergarten festivals primarily focus on nature's changing processes.

By observing the children and addressing their needs both as a class and individually, each teacher is responsible for establishing the appropriate form and rhythm necessary to create a Waldorf program. Since this is the child's first experience of school, care is taken to introduce the children gradually to the greater community. There will be opportunities to celebrate festivals within the familiarity of the class community and at other times with all the kindergartens.

In Waldorf kindergarten, we celebrate each child's birthday as a joyous occasion and invite parents to participate. Since this day is so special to your child, we ask that at least one parent join in the celebration. Your classroom teacher will discuss specific details of the celebration before the birthday.

Media

The Waldorf Early Childhood Program works with the development of the child's physical body. During the first seven years the child needs human interaction, imaginative play, and lots of natural movement. There is substantial scientific research demonstrating electronic media's negative impact on the child's developing neurological system. Therefore, the teachers strongly request that the children enrolled in Waldorf School of the Peninsula's Early Childhood Program be free from media exposure. We recognize this high ideal as a challenge for some families. However, the Early Childhood teachers are confident that by working together the goal can be attained.

As you transition your child out of media dependence you will find it helpful to move the television and computer to a remote corner of the house, out of the living room/play room/child's room. Cover them when not in use. Put together a box of special art and craft materials that are different from the child usually has, such as an assortment of buttons, macaroni, junk jewelry, as well as the standard glue, scissors, and paper. This box comes out ONLY at times the child would be watching TV.

If you use the television to occupy child while you prepare meals, try giving your child helpful chores instead: cutting carrots, washing dishes, setting the table.

Some books parents have found helpful include: *The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy*, by Rudolf Steiner; *Endangered Minds: Why Children Don't Think and What We Can Do About It*, by Jane Healy; *A is for Ox: Violence, Electronic Media, and the Silencing of the Written Word*, by Barry Sanders; *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, by Jerry Mander, and *Evolution's End*, by Joseph Chilton Pearce.

Your child's teacher is available to support you through this transition.

Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy

Rudolf Steiner's Encyclopedia Britannica entry identifies him as "an Austrian philosopher, scientist and artist, born on February 27, 1861 in what is now Kraljevec, Croatia. His formal education, supplemented with much self-education, was completed at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna, where he edited an edition of Goethe's scientific writings, and from 1889 to 1896 worked on the standard edition of Goethe's works at Weimar. During this period, he wrote *Truth and Science*, which secured his Ph.D., and his best known philosophical work, *Die Philosophie der Freiheit* (*The Philosophy of Freedom*, 1894). He then moved to Berlin where he was the editor of the *Magazin für Literatur* and lecturer in a workers' college."

Throughout the early period of his life, Steiner developed a philosophy recognizing a human spiritual perception independent of the bodily senses. With the publication of *Philosophy of Freedom*, Steiner began to share his spiritual research, which he called anthroposophy and defined as "knowledge produced by the higher self of man." He founded the Anthroposophical Society in 1912. Steiner believed that through diligent practice of meditation and concentration one could awaken into the spiritual world itself.

Steiner dedicated the second half of his life to applying the principles of anthroposophy to the riddles of human existence and the problems of society. He inspired Waldorf schools, organic farming and gardening (biodynamic agriculture), anthroposophic medicine, a movement for social renewal, homes and schools for disabled children and adults (Camphill villages), and centers and schools for science, mathematics, drama, speech, painting, sculpture, and architecture. By his death on March 30, 1925, Steiner had given thousands of lectures and written numerous books on diverse subjects. Many have been translated into English and are available at our school bookstore or the Anthroposophical Press.

Although anthroposophy is the philosophy from which Waldorf schools have emerged, each Waldorf school is independent of the Anthroposophical Society. Waldorf teachers study the principals of anthroposophy as part of their teacher training and normally work with anthroposophy as part of their own personal development, but within the curriculum of the school, anthroposophy and its principles are not mentioned. Regular study groups and occasional groups taking up a specific topic are available for parents who are interested in the philosophy that underlies Waldorf education.