



Waldorf School OF BEND

Early Childhood Handbook

Revised August 2019

**"Receive the child in reverence,
Educate the child in love,
Let the child go forth in freedom."**

Rudolf Steiner

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WELCOME

Dear Parents,

Each year there is an air of excitement surrounding the Preschool and Kindergarten. The doors of those wonderful kingdoms are soon to open; the little children have waited a long while and now it is time to begin.

Then the day comes. Both parents and children arrive equally excited. Parents depart with one last good-bye kiss, entrusting their dear little ones to our care. The child's day begins full of creative play, perhaps painting or baking, circle time, lots of singing and stories. When parents arrive to collect their children, eagerly questioning the day's events, they are most often answered by dreamy gazes and "nothing" seems to be the statement most given to the question, "What did you do today in school?"

Because of the child's ability to live in the present moment, he/she is unable to recount the day's events intellectually. We soon learn to interpret their way of retelling the day's events. Perhaps we hear a little fragment of a song or a line of a verse, or the name of a new friend.

And now comes the question: How can we create a bridge between the school and home - to bring together a harmonious meeting of the two? We give to you this booklet, with the hope that it sheds some light on the Waldorf Early Childhood Program and how we look at our work with the children.

We want you to feel that we are always open to your questions or concerns, and that through the school we may grow as parents, teachers, and children together in a true community.

The Early Childhood Faculty

Philosophy

Infants and young children are entirely given over to their physical surroundings; they absorb the world primarily through their senses and respond in the most active mode of knowing: imitation. Imitation is the power to identify oneself with one's immediate environment through one's active will.

Anger, love, joy, hate, intelligence, stupidity - speak to the infant through tone of voice, physical touch, bodily gesture, light, darkness, color, harmony, and disharmony. These influences are absorbed by the still forming physical organism and affect it for a lifetime.

As teachers, we feel responsibility to create an environment that is worthy of the child's unquestioning imitation. We want to offer the child plenty of opportunities for meaningful imitation and creative play. This supports the child in the central activity of the early years: the development of the physical organism. We understand that to draw the child's energies away from this fundamental task to meet premature intellectual demands, robs the child of the health and vitality he or she will need for later life and weakens the very powers of judgment and practical intelligence the teacher wants to encourage.

In our program children dress up and become mothers and fathers, kings, queens, fairies and gnomes; they sing, paint, and color. Through songs and poems, they learn to enjoy language; they learn to play together; hear stories, which they reenact in drama, see puppet shows, bake bread, make soup, model beeswax, build houses out of boxes, sheets and boards. It is our belief that to become fully engaged in such work is the child's best preparation for life. It builds powers of concentration, interest, and a life-long love of learning.

Our teaching is oral, dramatic, and creative. It challenges the children to develop gradually their awakening capacities to think clearly, to feel fully, and to act freely.

Preparing for the First Day

Three nights before school begins, tell your child a simple story at bedtime. The story could be created about a little animal in the forest and how she/he is getting ready to go to school. Make the story appropriate to your child; for example, choose the animal your child is most like. Is she/he slow and steady like a turtle or more like a rabbit who hops from place to place, or like a horse that flies with the wind, etc. Integrate your own personal life into the story - i.e. if you have a younger baby at home, tell how the little rabbit will hop out of his den and leave the baby rabbit at home safe in his nest and how the rabbit will hop off to school to meet all his new friends. Tell about all the things the little rabbit will do at school - play with friends, paint, color, sew, cook, bake, go for walks, hear stories and have birthday celebrations. Please tell this story each night for three nights as preparation.

Morning Arrival

Morning time is when we are our most sensitive. Being not long out of sleep and dreamland makes us very open to influences around us. Little children especially need to wake slowly and gently. We recommend a calm morning without rushing. We request that your child's morning be free from television and radio or CD/DVDs played in the car on the way to school. We wish to begin our morning together in an atmosphere of peace. Please bring your child quietly into the classroom and discourage loud behavior and running.

We prefer that you save any questions for us until after school. You may leave a note for your teacher with information, which you deem necessary for your child's well-being during the morning, or you may call us before or after school. If your child has had a hard morning, didn't eat his/her breakfast, or some family crisis has occurred, please give us a note and tell us to read it A.S.A.P. It is very important for us to be kept updated on events that may have an impact on your child.

The teachers will be ready to receive your children at 8:30 a.m. We are not responsible for, nor ready to receive the children prior to that time. If you arrive early to drop off an older sibling, please wait with your little one until their teacher is ready to receive them. You are welcome to enjoy the outdoor play areas with your child until our Early Childhood doors open. **Please do not leave your child alone in the playground or hallways or in the Great Room.**

Starting time is 8:30 AM. For your child's sake and that of the class please be on time. Rhythm strengthens the will and supports your child and the whole class. NEVER leave your child at the school entrance to come in alone if you are late for school. We may have gone to an assembly or on a walk and your child will find him/herself quite alone.

If you should arrive late, please help your child join the class with minimal disruption. Please find out from your teacher how they handle late arrivals.

Dismissal

Our day ends at 12:30 p.m. EVERYDAY. Please pick up your child promptly, as they are ready to see you when their day is done. It gives your child a wonderful secure feeling when you are on time at the end of the school day. If your child has not been picked up 15 minutes after dismissal he/she will be signed into the aftercare program and you will be charged accordingly.

Information regarding aftercare is available in the office.

Aftercare

While the Kindergarten and Preschool day ends at 12:30 p.m. EVERYDAY some students will stay for Aftercare. If you need care past 12:30 p.m., please visit the office to fill out the appropriate forms to assure your child has a space in this afternoon program.

Aftercare is available from 12:30 p.m. until 5pm. It is a first come first serve program. Sometimes drop-in spaces are available. For day of drop-in requests, please check in with Ms. Sarah in the office. More information regarding this program is available in the office.

Rhythms

Children are carried along by the rhythms of the world they live in, from the rhythms of breathing in their bodies to the daily rhythms of sleeping and waking. The yearly cycle of the seasons is part of life's experience for all of us. Our view is that children flourish when their daily activities reflect the natural order of life with a rhythmic arrangement of the day. Thus, the morning's activities flow with a sense of "breathing in and out" from the quiet moments of fairy tale and circle to the active moments of rigorous work and play.

Each day has its own special activity and its own food; for example: In the Huckleberry Pre-Kindergarten the first day each week is a Tuesday, celebrated as the beginning of the school week together with a rice snack and watercolor painting activity. Wednesday brings bread day with the artistic work of mixing, kneading, shaping and baking, followed by "stone soup" on Thursday~ a medley of fresh vegetables and hearty pasta~ prepared by the children. While the meal is cooking we celebrate the seasons and each other in circle time, then spend the morning in imaginative free play. After snack has been eaten and bellies full, the Huckleberries clean up together, dress themselves in outdoor gear and head outside to play in our early childhood play yard, rain or shine! We end the day with a quiet story time inside and short rest on the "lambies" with the sounds of the harp and glockenspiel. Holding hands, we say farewell and look forward to another day together.

The Doves Kindergarten: Monday, painting /rice; Tuesday, bread kneading/bread; Wednesday, coloring/millet; Thursday, beeswax/potato; Friday - Outdoor kindergarten weather permitting, chopping vegetables/vegetable soup.

The Hummingbird Kindergarten day also begins indoors with a 15-20-minute transition activity, such as rolling bread dough or crayon drawing, followed by circle, outdoor play, rest, snack, indoor play and seasonal crafting, tidy-up, story, lunch and goodbye.

The Pinecone Kindergarten also begins the day by sharing in an artistic activity together. The children then follow their teachers in a seasonal circle time, with songs, poems, and lots of healthy movement. The children are excused to play time, where they spend a full hour engaged in exploring their own imaginations and navigating the important social lessons that arise each day. During play time, the children also help their teachers to set the table, prepare snack, and have the opportunity to work on independent craft projects. After free play, the class shares a hearty snack together, and then prepares to head outside. The children and teachers spend a full hour outside every day to allow for enough time to be very active and play in the elements. The day ends with story time, where the children hear traditional tales from around the world, and have the opportunity to act out the stories and see their teachers perform them as puppet shows.

In keeping with the picture of a wholesome atmosphere, environment, and activities for the children, we take pains to make sure that the snacks we provide are of the highest quality. Organic foods are used. Each child's special needs are also considered. Therefore, if your child has allergies, please speak to his/her teacher. **WSB is a peanut free campus.**

Children are carried along by the regular rhythms of the school day, and they are nourished by regular rhythms at home as well. As difficult as it is in these modern times to establish set mealtimes and bedtimes, we strongly encourage you to do so. It is health giving for young children to go to bed at the same time every night and we recommend that they be **asleep** no later than 8:00 PM. We would be happy to share some ideas for making this transition a happy one for parent and child.

Attendance:

Helping to foster a healthy social and rhythmical classroom experience is also dependent upon your child's regular and consistent school attendance. We understand that illnesses occur and times for traveling arise as part of life. We as teachers wish to support you and your family both in school and outside of school. Please make every effort to communicate with your child's teacher regarding both expected and unexpected absences. A simple call

to the school office in the morning of an unexpected absence is greatly appreciated! Or a quick email to your child's teacher regarding an upcoming trip, is also greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

About Lunches ---For those children attending Aftercare only!

WSB is a peanut-free campus. Please speak with us about your child's sensitivities.

We wish that mealtimes be peaceful so that the meal may nourish the child body, soul and spirit. Please consider the following:

Bring lunches in a basket! If you choose pre-packaged foods, please select those that are also free from media images. Please provide a cloth napkin and water bottle for your child each day in their lunch container along with any utensils necessary for eating (spoon or fork, etc.)

If you include pre-packaged food be sure it is something that your child can open on his/her own. Otherwise you can open this at home and put it in a container easily opened by your child.

We cannot accommodate heating/cooking lunch foods at school. We do provide a hot meal in the morning. Many children enjoy eating hot food from a thermos. Please **do not** include foods that contain added sugar. All packaging and uneaten food will be returned home. Peelings, etc. will be composted at school.

Suggested items for lunch:

Simple finger foods, sandwich cut into quarters, sliced fruits & veggies, seaweed, small crackers, Baby bell cheese rounds and so forth.

These recommendations are to prevent a chaotic lunch experience. Thank you for your understanding and thoughtful selections that will assist the teachers and children to enjoy a nourishing mealtime!

Television & other Electronic Media

The foundational work of the Waldorf Early Childhood program is to offer a curriculum that allows the child's inner genius to unfold. We offer opportunities to exercise imitation and imagination, the young child's natural way of learning. These activities build the capacity for creative thinking. Because the physical body as well as the ability to form their own inner pictures is disturbed by exposure to electronic media, children exposed to these struggle to meet the demands of such a curriculum even through the grades.

The presence of television, movies, videos, computer use, and video games in a child's life is often clearly seen in the Kindergarten. The stimulating influence it has upon little children is visible in many ways. The child may speak in the tone of a certain character or machine where speech can be reduced to the sound of robots or mechanical noises. The child may seem "stuck" in creative play, unable to play anything but a "superhero", etc. Other children seem to lose their imagination and can't "think" of anything to play (not even house). Subtle changes may be noted in a child who cannot sit still during a story making it a distressing time instead of a time of wonderment and delight. Because the young child is unable to intellectually process over-stimulating and often violent images seen in movies and television (even those marketed for children), such visual experiences are then processed in the child's play. When this occurs at school, the entire class is affected.

Other effects of electronic media on children are uneasiness, lack of attention span or perseverance. Perhaps the greatest loss is the dimming effect it has on the child's wonderful imagination. It is this imagination that provides the foundation for learning and growth. We agree with educators who suggest that to enhance learning children should stay media free at least until they are literate and wish that for the children in our Early Childhood classes.

It is our hope that you will strive to find alternatives that will create memories for your child which are more precious than what the media has to offer. The teachers would be happy to share ideas for your family as well. **The Early Childhood classrooms and hallway spaces are Cell Phone Free Zones. Please leave your phone in the car.**

Visiting

Some parents have a regular morning on which they are the parent helper. This is much needed and valued assistance. Please alert the teacher when you are not able to attend so a substitute can be arranged if necessary. If you accept an assignment as a regular morning helper, we ask that your attention be focused on the children.

Some parents cannot attend regularly but are interested in substituting occasionally. Others simply want to visit from time to time. Parents are always welcome, but we would appreciate advanced notice of when you would like to visit. In this way we can coordinate visitors so that the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten do not become overcrowded with adults.

We welcome your support in the classroom whether you are a regular parent volunteer or just visiting for the day. We would like to offer a few guidelines for your visit to insure the optimum environment is created for the children. We try to limit our adult conversation to that which supports the rhythm of the day. If questions arise, we can create time for adult conversation outside of class time. Our goal is to be present for the children and to create a space for them to fully live into their imaginations.

We strive to create an environment where the child can freely create through art and play. Respecting this space, we do not question the children about, or attempt to enter into their art or their play. Instead, we stay in a place of warm observation, keeping our grown-up judgments to ourselves. For the young child, the artistic *process* is more highly valued than the product.

Our words very often become too much for the children. As our mothers always told us: "Actions speak louder than words." This is especially true for the young child who lives in his will in imitation. We find that they most often want to do what the grownups are doing. Therefore, if it is time to come to circle or the snack table, it is very helpful if the adults

come into the activity and sit down to wait, as we want the children to do. Most often, the children will follow.

It is essential for the good care of your child that parents and teachers communicate. We always want to know your concerns and are grateful for your questions and suggestions. For their protection, these conversations are best held beyond the earshot of the children. Please feel free to talk with us by phone or to arrange a meeting, and we will do the same.

We look forward to sharing our mornings with you!

Festivals

In the Early Childhood classes, we mark the rhythms of the year through the changing seasons and the coming and going of festivals. As the year weaves from one festival to another we are provided with a true reason for preparation and celebration. For the young child the preparation is half the joy. They love decorating the room, baking special treats, and learning songs and verses chosen just for that particular festival. Stories that are told give the children a pictorial understanding of the festival and speak very deeply to them without our need to explain anything.

Festivals celebrated in the Kindergarten and Pre-kindergarten are Harvest/Michaelmas, Fall Equinox gardening day, Halloween (Autumn Journey), Lantern walk/Martinmas, Thanksgiving, Advent, Winter Solstice, Christmas, Hanukkah, Valentine's Day, Lunar New Year, Spring Equinox, Easter, Earth Day Gardening Day, and May Faire.

We are grateful for families who wish to share festivals from their culture. In the past we have also enjoyed Cinco de Mayo, Tu bi-Savat and Japanese fables. Please speak to us in time to prepare for your offering.

Each room has a nature table which evolves with the seasons, bringing into the room a way for the children to note these changes. Children love this table. We suggest that you let your child have a small table or windowsill to create his or her own nature or seasonal table at home.

Birthday Celebrations

The teachers regard your child's presence in their class as a blessing and are grateful for the opportunity to express this appreciation on his or her birthday. Each teacher has a slightly different way of honoring the child at this time. Most often, a birthday story is told which through the imagination describes an understandable picture of the human birth experience. This is followed by singing, birthday snack, and a special gift given by the teacher to the child. The unique birthday ceremony given by each teacher can be a memorable occasion for your child, and parents are an important part of this ceremony. Grandparents, and siblings are also warmly welcomed to participate. As your child's birthday draws near, your teacher will contact you to discuss details.

If your child's birthday does not fall within the school year, his or her 1/2 birthday may be celebrated, or a group birthday for the summer children may be held.

Clothing

The Preschool and Kindergartens are places of active work and play. For your child's comfort and enjoyment of the morning we recommend the following:

Early Childhood Dress Code Guidelines:

YES:

Sturdy clothes for active play

Natural fibers for comfort and breathe-ability

Sturdy shoes with simple closures, such as Velcro (or laces at ages 5-6)

Slippers or shoes for wear inside the classroom*

Socks and Underwear

Sun hat & warm winter hat (*Kindergarteners will have a change of clothes bag at school with 2-3 socks, 2-3 pair of undies, 2 shirts, 2 pants, 1 sweater or sweatshirt)

Gloves/mittens (waterproof for winter)

Jacket, Coat, or Sweater

Boots, Rain Coat, Rain Hat, Snow pants - we will go out on rainy/snowy days

Layers for comfort inside and outside

Please label all clothing, hats, sweatshirts, etc. snow pants, gloves, hats are often identical! Labeling is imperative!

Please, **NO**:

Sleeveless clothing

Sandals, Flip Flops, Cowboy boots, Jellies, Clogs, slip-ons, dressy "party" shoes, or shoes with sound or lights

Popular media, video, and sports-inspired images on clothing. Logos or images of any kind, word messages (the exception is Waldorf tees and sweatshirts) larger than the palm of a child's hand.

Media characters or messages on any clothing, lunchboxes or accessories

Camouflage

Jewelry

Writing or drawing on skin (includes face paint, stickers, and tattoos)

Hair accessories, hair dye, or distracting hair styles (such as Mohawks)

Nail polish

More About Clothing

Children cannot help imitating/becoming the images they see. To create a peaceful classroom atmosphere, image free clothing is best. For instance, a dinosaur or rocket ship are not media images, but would not contribute to a peaceful classroom atmosphere. Your child is not looking at the image, but that is what the other children and the teachers see when they look at your child. Solids are best. Plaids, prints, stripes, etc. OK.

"Accidents" are occasional, but we do get wet washing dishes, or gardening, etc. **An extra shirt and pants are welcome** and can be stored at school.

*Inside shoes or slippers should be flexible for play and able to stay on the foot. Slippers with sturdy soles that come up over the ankle are best. Lightweight, rubber soled "keds", ballet slippers, bedroom slippers with elastic around the top, Asian shoes, moccasins, slipper sox with non-skid bottoms are all possibilities. Inside shoes will surely have to be replaced as your child's feet continue to grow. Please, no animal-head slippers, slip-ons, sequins, wild patterns, flashing lights etc.

*Through our work we have noted how commercial television and or movie images printed on clothing and personal belongings affect the imaginative play of little children. Because we try to provide as beautiful and as tranquil an environment as possible, we ask you to refrain from sending your child to school with these. We request lunches to arrive from home in a simple basket.

Personal Belongings

Please do not send or allow anything from home in the way of toys, books, jewelry, stickers, makeup, or items that like to hide in pockets. These personal items are grieved if lost and detract from our morning.

Check the lost and found periodically for lost clothes. Seasonally articles left in the lost and found are donated to charity. The newsletter will give warning that a donation is about to happen. Your best protection against loss is to label your child's clothing and personal articles!

Sharing

It is our goal that we will share about families, friends, and ourselves. If your child wants to bring something to share with the class, it should be a treasure from nature, or something that is handmade. Your child's teacher will fill you in as to if there is a special day for sharing.

Early Childhood Parent Meetings

Throughout the school year, your child's teacher will schedule parent meetings. **These are required meetings** essential for understanding and supporting the work of the teacher with the child, as well as supporting the home life. There is both a social and pedagogical aspect to these parent gatherings, which brings a wonderful opportunity for community building. If unusual circumstances keep you or your spouse/partner from being able to attend, please coordinate with your teacher as soon as possible.

Parent Teacher Conferences

These are also required gatherings and are important for deepening the teachers' understanding of the child. Conferences provide an opportunity to share observations about your child. The teachers are always grateful for communication from you about significant changes or circumstances in your child's life. You do not need to wait until conferences to discuss your child with his/her teacher. Please make an appointment any time it is needed.

Home Visits

A home visit can help to build a bridge between home and school. The children love to introduce teacher to their pets, show their room and yard and share a cup of tea. Your child's teacher will be in touch to schedule these visits over the summer and into the fall.

First Grade Readiness

There are many factors that help us to decide if a child is ready for the first grade. Children who do not turn 6 years by Easter will be evaluated in the spring as to whether they should move on to first grade or grow for another year in the kindergarten. You and your child's teacher will work together to determine the best placement for your child.

Suggested Reading

You are Your Child's First Teacher: Rahima Baldwin

The Incarnating Child: Joan Salter

Work and Play in the Early Childhood: Freya Jaffke

Festivals, Families and Food: Casey and Large

Waldorf Education, A Family Guide: Fenner & Rivers

The Magical Child: Joseph Chilton Pearce

Evolution's End: Joseph Chilton Pearce

Lifeways: Gudrun & Bon Voors

Endangered Minds: Dr. Jane Healy

Renewal Magazine, A guide to Waldorf Education for Parents and Teachers \$12 Annual
Subscription

"Why Waldorf Works" on AWSNA Website