



**THE WALDORF SCHOOL**  
of Santa Barbara

Early Childhood Parent Handbook  
**2012-13**

Waldorf School of Santa Barbara  
**Early Childhood Handbook**

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# Introduction

Dear Parents,

It is always an exhilarating moment each September as the children enter the early childhood program, their eyes wide with wonder and anticipation. The parents receive one last goodbye kiss as they entrust their child into our care. One imagines what the child's morning might be like: full of creative play, singing, stories, baking. When school is over, the child is asked, "What did you do today in school?" "Nothing," answers the little one, unable to recall. Yet we suspect that there *was* more to it than that. Maybe the child begins to sing little tunes at home as s/he plays, or requests a blessing at meal-time "like in kindergarten," or begins to search for elves in the bushes or gnomes in the stones. How can we create a bridge between home and school so that parents and teachers can provide a harmonious, integrated experience for the child?

In this handbook, we hope to provide you with basic information about our classes, classroom guidelines, and information about how we can all work together to create the best possible experience for the children. We hope that you will find us always open to your questions and concerns and that we all – teachers and parents – will grow along with the children in true community.

Early Childhood Team

# Parent Participation & Responsibilities

## *Class Parents*

Class parents share with the teacher a commitment to foster open relationships between teachers and parents and among parents themselves. They attend Parent Guild meetings, or select an alternate to attend in their place. They coordinate parent help with assorted tasks associated with the classroom and school events and help to welcome new families to the school. Your child's teacher will be choosing at least one parent as a class parent; please let your teacher know if you are interested in this responsibility. We ask that all parents be respectful of and give support to the class parents.

## *Parent Guild*

The Parent Guild was formed to promote participation and communication in the school community. All parents of currently enrolled students are members of the Parent Guild and are invited to attend the monthly meetings (see online school calendar for dates).

## *Parent Evenings and All-School Meetings*

Early Childhood parent evenings are scheduled regularly; you will receive a schedule for the year from your teacher. Please schedule these dates into your calendars in order for each child to be represented at every meeting by one or both parents. At these meetings we will discuss the children's experiences and activities in the classroom, educational philosophy and ideals, child rearing, general issues of concern, upcoming events and school business. If you have questions or suggestions about parent evenings, please speak with your child's teacher.

We also have at least two All School Meetings per year to share important information about our school.

## *Parent Teacher Conferences*

Conferences are scheduled in November for Nursery children and November and spring for Kindergarten children. Conferences provide an opportunity for parents and teachers to share their impressions, joys and concerns. The teachers will provide sign-up lists for the designated conference times. Please sign up for a time or speak to your teacher about other time options. Individual conferences can be arranged with the teacher at any time if parents have a special concern about their child or the class. **Teachers are grateful to hear immediately of significant changes or circumstances in the child's life.** Please contact your teacher via email or phone or speak to the teacher directly at a convenient time.

## Parent Participation & Responsibilities (cont.)

### *Community Contributions*

A successful Waldorf school is dependent upon and truly grateful for the contributions of energy, talent, support and commitment from the parents, families and the surrounding community. Your profession, talents, hobbies, and the activities that bring you joy, can all help support our school as well as give you the opportunity to become an integral part of our community.

We have found that the parents and families who have been the most involved in the workings of our school have also been the most fulfilled and satisfied with their experience here. This is the best way to involve yourself actively in your child's education at the Waldorf School of Santa Barbara, as well as enrich your own life socially.

In order to find out details about the following committees and how you can best get involved, you can contact your child's teacher, the administrative office, or refer to the Paper Lantern.

**Parent Guild**

**Festivals Committee**

**Fundraising Committee**

**P.O.E.M. (Publicity, Outreach, Enrollment & Marketing)**

**Site Beautification Committee**

**Site Search Committee**

### *Communication Between Home & School*

The following forms of communication are currently in place from school to home:

- Parent & Early Childhood Handbooks:** Important school information is contained in these books. You are responsible for reading that information.
- Email:** The school and your child's teacher use email communication. Please make sure that your current email address is on file with the office and with your class teacher. Inform your class teacher and the office if you do not use email.
- The Paper Lantern:** This is our quarterly newsletter. It contains news about fundraiser and festival information, and interesting and educational articles about our curriculum and class activities. Your teacher may not necessarily communicate Paper Lantern contents with you; you are responsible for reading this newsletter.
- walfordsantabarbara.org:** Our website contains updated calendar and other valuable information.

## Parent Participation & Responsibilities (cont.)

Communication from home to school:

- Please let your child's teacher know about any unusual pick-up or drop-off situations verbally, as well as leaving a **dated and signed** note, indicating exactly what is occurring. In an emergency, you can also leave a text or message on your teacher's cell phone.

**To report absences, illnesses or late arrivals, contact your child's teacher via text message or phone before 8:20am that morning.**

-If you have questions regarding administrative issues, business and/or monetary concerns, enrollment and/or admissions processes, please contact our office at 967-6656.

***-For any issues pertaining to your child's classroom and/or teacher, contact that teacher.*** You may call your teacher to have a phone conference, or make an appointment with your child's teacher. Email should not be used in place of a conference. Please do not use pick-up and drop-off times for major discussions with your child's teacher.

***-For grievances that involve your class or teacher, please contact your teacher first.*** If you do not feel resolved, please follow the grievance procedure as outlined in our All School Parent Handbook under "Parent Teacher Concerns" on page 16. This involves contacting a member of the Care and Concerns Committee.

### ***Illness Policy***

Waldorf teaching is concerned with the whole child and respects the relationship between health and the educational process. You will find the teachers very interested and receptive to any comments you share about your child's health, illness (past and present), sleeping and eating habits, stresses and home life rhythms.

If your child seems overly tired or appears to be coming down with a cold or illness, please keep him or her at home. A young child who is overly tired may find the activity of school overwhelming and his or her health may be adversely affected. When in doubt, please keep your child at home for a day of rest. After an illness, children often appear healthy in the morning, return to school, and then suffer a relapse because they have not fully recovered. We require *at least one full day* of rest at home following an illness, as well as after vomiting, diarrhea, or having had a temperature above 99.

Please report to your child's teacher any contagious illness such as chicken pox, staph infection, or head lice that your child has been exposed to.

If your child becomes ill at school, we will contact you immediately.

## ***Clothing***

Early Childhood classes are places of active work and play where a good part of each day is spent outdoors, whether *rain or shine*. For the child's experience of nature and the elements to be a rewarding one, s/he must wear practical and sensible clothing. This includes sturdy shoes and comfortable clothing appropriate for running and playing, all of which will get dirty. PLEASE AVOID HIGH FASHION! It is distracting and unsafe. Also, please leave watches, necklaces and other jewelry, and pocket toys **at home**; they get lost or broken at school, a traumatic event for your child.

Please supply a complete change of clothing for your child, *fully labeled*, to be left in the classroom in case of emergency. This set should include socks, two pairs of underwear, a shirt, pants, and a sweater, all weather appropriate. Even though we live in a warm climate, it is still cool in the mornings and in the shade. Please dress your child in layers that can come off as the day warms up. As mentioned above, in rainy season we go outside to experience the weather. Please be prepared to send your child with a raincoat and rain boots.

We encourage simple clothing at school. Toys, jewelry, make-up and nail polish, blinking shoes, collections, stuffed animals, anything of the latest media fads, are all too distracting and interfere with the children engaging actively and creatively during school time. We have noticed that printed T-shirts featuring pictures of TV and other characters, creatures, super heroes, surfers, skaters, etc., have a negative effect on the creative play of the children and ask that such clothing not be worn to school. These images, which are intrusive and over-stimulating to young and tender minds, may interfere with the children's ability to enter into imaginative play.

Ask your teacher where the LOST & FOUND for your classroom is located. All clothing, not retrieved in a timely manner will be donated to a good cause or sold at one of our school rummage sales. It is helpful to label all of your child's clothing, especially jackets and rain gear.

## Classroom Guidelines

*Parents have the right to check-in on their child at school at any time.*

We consider the following items extremely important to the well being of our classroom environments. Please read them carefully and contact us if you have any questions. We are counting on you to help us in our endeavor to provide your child with the optimum play and learning environment.

### ***Hellos, Good-byes, and Separation***

Your child's teacher will greet your child each morning. To facilitate a healthy relationship with the teacher, as well as provide a positive transition for your child, allow your child to see you greet the teacher each morning.

Saying goodbye, especially when the school year begins, can be challenging for both parents and children. Preparing prior to coming to school will help you and your child have a successful separation. Having the children's clothes ready the night before, getting up early enough for grooming and having necessary items ready for drop off, as well as eating a nourishing breakfast will allow you the opportunity to spend time with your child in order to say goodbye.

Be sure that you are ready to say goodbye because your child will follow your lead. Your child is looking to you for the cues that you know they will be okay. Avoiding a lengthy teary goodbye at the door will help your child to adjust and to come into the classroom and begin their day with the other children. It also helps the other children, who have already said their good byes and have begun to play. If you would like support or assistance with separation and good byes, please call your teacher in advance to set up a plan.

The early childhood day officially starts at 8:30 am. We stress that a punctual arrival is in the best interest of your child, as well as the whole class. Our day ends at 12:30. Any child not picked up by 12:45 will go directly into After School Care; there is an extra charge for this service. For more information on our After School Care program, talk with your child's teacher.

### ***Food***

Healthful snacks such as home baked breads, tortillas, porridge, fruit, soup or rice are served in the early childhood. If your child has any food allergies, please speak to your child's teacher. **We have a no sugar policy.** Please do not include any sugared food in your child's lunch, for example cookies, candy, soda and processed, packaged foods that contain sugar.



## Classroom Guidelines (cont.)

### *Media & Modern Technology*

We recognize that television, videos, movie going, computer use and recorded music are in the domain of the family and each family must decide what role these technological devices will play in their lives. **We fully support the many families at our school who choose not to expose their children to these influences, and work hard to keep any exposure to a minimum.\*** This is an important discussion to have with other parents when setting up play-dates for your child.

Due to the developmental needs of the young child, we encourage you to find alternative ways for your children to spend their time. Helping with the real domestic work of the family such as gardening, cooking, carpentry, cleaning, washing, and helping parents, brothers, and sisters, are both useful and fulfilling activities.

Providing the children with an environment that will stimulate their imagination will offer them hours of play and the opportunity to practice autonomy. The children of today could benefit from learning how to entertain themselves, rather than be continually entertained. Access to household sheets, yards of fabric, moveable furniture, kitchen cookware, dress-up clothes and hats, a basket of musical instruments, all provide hours of activity and creative fun. An art corner filled with paint, paper, crayons, glue, string, sticks, etc. can be the answer to that age old question, “What can I do?” or statements like, “I’m bored, there is nothing to do.”

In our recommended reading list, at the back of this handbook, are books that can provide you with scientifically based information, and support your own common sense reasons, for toning down and possibly even tuning out the modern technology and media in the daily life of your young child. Please do look into them and feel free to ask your child’s teacher any questions you may have on these subjects.

\* For more information on this topic, refer to the Waldorf Family Guide article entitled, “Push-button entertainment.”

# **A View of the Year**

## ***Daily, Weekly & Yearly Rhythms***

The young child is carried along by the rhythms of life, from the small rhythms of in-breath and out-breath, to the daily rhythms of waking and sleeping, the weekly rhythms of home and school, and larger cosmic rhythms of the seasons. It is our intention to work with these rhythms so that the children experience the natural order of life. Thus, each morning has its own rhythms, breathing in and breathing out, from quiet moments of artistic work to the independent exploration of creative play, from coming together at morning circle to the outdoor recess time.

Simple rituals help to mark the milestones of the day, such as a song to announce clean-up time, a blessing at snack time or a goodbye song at the end of the school day. The teachers work artistically with these rhythms so that they are harmonious and helpful to the children; thus the daily and weekly routines vary in each group and align with the developmental stages of the children.

Your child's teacher will provide you with a schedule of the weekly and daily rhythms and activities for their class. Usually the morning begins with creative play, artistic work and domestic work, as well as with a morning circle-time, which includes songs, games, and finger-plays that are a reflection of the weather, nature and seasons in the world around us. This is followed by snack, outdoor play, and then we come back inside again for story-time, lunch and the closing of the day. Each day has its own special activity such as baking day, painting day, or soup making day.

The rhythms of the year are not only reflected in our circle-times, but also in the stories that we tell, (some fairy-tales and nature stories are suited better for some seasons), as well as in our celebrations of the festivals.

## ***Festivals***

The larger rhythms of the seasons are marked by the preparation and celebration of the festivals of the year which weave into one another because the seasons are related and intertwined. Here the experience of the quality of each season is deepened and celebrated. The children love preparing for the festivals by decorating the room, baking special treats, learning special songs, verses, singing games or even a little play. Nature stories and special tales help to bring the deeper significance of the season to the children in a pictorial way.

In our own inner preparation for the festivals, we ponder the qualities of each season to be celebrated: gratitude at harvest time; the courage, strength, and perseverance of Michaelmas; the love and light of Christmas, Hannukah and Winter Solstice; the transformation, miracle, and rebirth of Easter, Passover and springtime; the gaiety and celebration of nature at May Day; and the bright fire of Summer Solstice. These qualities are expressed in the celebration itself through the power of pictures, songs, stories, drama and ritual, thus providing nourishment for body, soul and spirit.

## **A View of the Year (cont.)**

Each classroom has a special nature table as a focal point for the weaving, moving cycles of the year. In autumn we collect the fruits, nuts and berries, grasses and grains of the harvest. In winter, we slowly create a garden with elements from the mineral, plant, animal and human kingdoms, each represented by one of the weeks of Advent. We light candles in preparation for taking our inner light into the darkness of winter. In spring, when flowers abound, we sprout bulbs as well as place representations of spring animal life on the nature table. Hand made dwarfs, elves and fairies made of beeswax, felt, roving, nutshells, etc. are also likely to visit the nature tables from time to time. The children love to have such a little seasonal table or Nature Garden at home as well, where they can display their summer seashells, autumn nuts or other treasures from nature.

### ***Verses & Blessings***

Verses, songs, and blessings are part of the rhythm and ritual throughout the morning in the early childhood program. If you are interested in finding songs and verses for morning, meal times or bed-time at home, there are many such books available in our school store, In A Nutshell. Your teachers are happy to give some suggestions as well.

## Recommended Reading List

Baldwin-Dancy, Rahima:	<u>You Are Your Child's First Teacher</u>
Chilton-Pearce, Joseph:	<u>The Magical Child,</u> <u>Evolution's End</u>
Edmunds, Francis:	<u>Rudolf Steiner Education</u>
Fenner, Pamela Johnson & Rivers, Karen L., Editors	<u>Waldorf Education, A Family Guide</u>
Glas, Norbert:	<u>Conception, Birth and Early Childhood</u>
Glockler,M.D., Michaela:	<u>The Health of a Child</u>
Goleman, Daniel:	<u>Emotional Intelligence</u>
Grunelius, Elizabeth:	<u>Early Childhood Education and the Waldorf Plan</u>
Haller, Ingeborg:	<u>How Children Play</u>
Harwood, A.C.:	<u>The Way of a Child,</u> <u>Child &amp; Man</u>
Konig, Karl:	<u>Brothers and Sisters</u>
Lott, Lynn & Intner, Riki:	<u>Chores Without Wars</u>
Mellon, Nancy	<u>Storytelling with Children</u> <u>Storytelling and the Art of Imagination</u>
Nelson, Jane, Ed.D., et al:	<u>Positive Discipline for Preschoolers</u>
Pollack, William, Ph.D.:	<u>Real Boys</u>
Richards, M.C.:	<u>Towards Wholeness, Rudolf Steiner Education in America</u>
Spayth Riley, Sue:	<u>How to Generate Values in Young Children</u>
Spock, Marjorie:	<u>Teaching as a Lively Art</u>
Steiner, Rudolf:	<u>The Kingdom of Childhood,</u> <u>The Education of the Child,</u> <u>The Four Temperaments</u>
Stock Kranowitz, Carol	<u>The Out-of-Sync Child</u>