

Kindergarten Handbook



Blue Oak School

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Welcome!

Dear Parents,

Welcome, and thank you for joining the Blue Oak School community. We look forward to building a bond with you and your child. Our Kindergartens are now:

Columbine Kindergarten –
Teacher Susan Whittlesey

Maple Rose Kindergarten –
Teacher Cheryl Grant

Lavender Kindergarten –
Teacher Barbara Roberts

Each of the three Kindergartens is unique. All three, however, are based on the understanding that young children learn primarily through imitation.

Storytelling, puppetry and creative play kindle the imagination and form the basic foundations for numeracy and literacy (building Language Arts and Math skills).

Logic and problem solving are developed through such activities as building with blocks, rocks and stones and interacting with others in play.

Active outdoor play and nature walks increase physical strength, agility and a veneration for the natural world. A well-developed sense of our interconnectedness leads to an interest and understanding of the sciences.

Fine motor skills and an aesthetic sense are developed through painting, drawing, beeswax modeling, seasonal crafts and sewing.

The harmony of group activity is learned through circle games, singing, cleanup and practical activities. Through group harmony, the child begins a path toward personal responsibility and respect for others.

As each day unfolds in an unhurried way through established rhythm, the children benefit by gaining a sense of security and consistency. A nurturing environment of love, warmth and harmony serves as a gentle transition between the security of home and the coming grade years. The children's days are filled with both structured and unstructured activities. Bowing foremost to the power of play and the dynamic powers of imagination, the child endeavors to build the strong and sturdy foundations needed for later academic work.

We strive to deliver a "classical" education that is free from the influences of popular culture. Traditional values such as veneration, meaningful work, and imaginative play are cultivated in the Kindergarten. Our teaching challenges children to develop gradually their awakening capacities to think clearly, to feel fully, and to act freely.

The following is a brief overview of our Kindergarten program. Please read through the rest of this handbook and save it as a reference throughout the school year.

Warmly,

The Kindergarten Faculty

Morning Arrival

Kindergarten begins at 8:30am with outdoor free play, which is an important part of our curriculum. Timeliness strengthens the will and therefore supports your child and the whole class. If you are tardy please check in at the office before accompanying your child to class. Our play yard will be open and supervised beginning at 8am.

Morning time is often when we are our most sensitive. Being not long out of sleep and dreamland makes us open to influences around us. Little children especially need to wake slowly and gently. We recommend a calm morning, with a healthy breakfast, and without rushing. We request that your child's morning be free of television, radio and media played in the car on the way to school.

Dismissal

The Kindergarten program does not include lunch and ends at 12:30 pm. Please be prepared to be a few minutes early to give your child the wonderful, secure feeling that you are there waiting at the end of the school day. Please be sure to connect with your child's teacher before you leave.

Information regarding CARD's After School Program is available on Blue Oak's website or by calling CARD's office. It is essential that you pick up your child on time, as CARD does not offer their program on a drop-in basis.

Rhythm of the Kindergarten Day

The rhythm of the Kindergarten day reflects the child's need for regular cycles of activity and quiet, a sense of "breathing out and in" from vigorous play or work, to calm moments of storytelling or painting. Each Kindergarten has its own particular daily and weekly rhythm of food and activities.

Children are carried along by the rhythms of the world in which they live, from the regularity of breathing to the daily patterns of eating, sleeping and waking. The young child is particularly affected by rhythm and environment, taking everything in through imitative gesture. The yearly cycles of seasons, festivals and the natural order of life's simple activities offer a comfortable rhythm in which the young child can immerse him/herself.

Regular rhythms at home, including meal and bedtimes, complement those of school. In order for children to enjoy the fruits of an active Kindergarten day they need to be well rested. A consistently early bedtime is highly recommended. We believe that allowing time for a relaxed transition to the world of sleep can be very healing. All children benefit from the nurturing flow of a regular rhythm throughout their days, weeks, months and years.

Festivals

In the Kindergarten we mark the rhythms of the year through the changing seasons and festivals. For the young child, preparation for the upcoming season or festival is full of joyful anticipation. They love to decorate, bake special treats, and learn songs and verses chosen especially for these particular times.

Blue Oak School celebrates certain festivals each year. The Harvest Festival, Lantern Walk (for the younger children through grade two), Thanksgiving, Festival of Lights, May Day, and the May Faire are all wonderful whole-school events.

Birthday Celebrations

The unique birthday ceremony given by your teacher will be a memorable occasion for your child. Parents are encouraged to attend. We ask that you leave cameras at home, as the sounds and lights can distract children from the experience. Your child's teacher will provide you with details regarding the timing and activities for birthday celebrations in your child's class.

Toys at School

Toys from home remain at home, and toys from school remain at school. Items from nature may be brought to share.

Home Visits

The home visit helps to build a bridge between home and school and provides an opportunity for children to delight in having their teacher for a short visit and show them their room, siblings, treasures, pets, etc. This visit can create a special teacher-child bond and is a treat for the teacher as well. These visits typically occur during the summer before school begins or are interspersed during the school year, depending on your child's teacher.

Food

We enjoy a wholesome snack during the Kindergarten morning.

Your monetary donations support this meaningful program. Please make efforts to contribute before the school year begins.

The Kindergarten program does not include lunch. Your child will be ready for a hearty, healthy lunch at dismissal time.

Please inform your teacher and the office if your child has any dietary restrictions and/or allergies.

Clothing

Kindergarten is a place of active work and play. For your child's comfort and enjoyment of the morning, please send him/her in clothing that you will not be worried about keeping clean or stain free. We highly recommend that it also be free of logos, lights, media and such. Please dress your child appropriately for all kinds of weather: sun, rain, or cold. We believe there is no such thing as "bad" weather, and make great efforts to spend time outdoors daily. Footwear should be firm around the foot. Flip-flops are not allowed at school.

Please bring a seasonally appropriate change of clothing, labeled with your child's name, to be kept in the Kindergarten. We remove our shoes when indoors, so your child will need snug indoor footwear or socks in which he/she can easily move and play.

Television and Media

We respectfully ask that you turn your TV and all other screen activity OFF for the next few years.

Some effects of electronic media on children are uneasiness, lack of attention span, or the inability to persevere. Perhaps the greatest loss is the dimming effect it has on the child's wonderful imagination. It is this imagination which provides the foundation for learning and growth.

The overly stimulating influence of television, movies, computer use and video games can reveal itself in many ways. During creative playtime, the child may seem 'stuck', unable to play anything but a superhero, transformer, or "emergency". Some children seem to lose their imagination, and can't 'think' of anything to play. Other children may not be able to sit still during a story, and instead of a time of wonderment and delight the child experiences a time of distress.

Alternatives are always available. Creative play – outside or in – painting, drawing, dishwashing, gardening, carpentry, furniture polishing, working alongside mom or dad, family walks or bike rides, board games, storytelling, simple conversing, etc. Endless, endless, ENDLESS possibilities abound!

Health

Bright-eyed, healthy children engaging in vigorous play and fully participating in activities is the optimum picture in the Kindergarten. Of course, it is normal for children to experience various sicknesses as they grow. The lively Kindergartens are not soothing environments for a sick child. Please arrange your lives so that your child may remain in a quiet and restful environment when he or she is ill.

All working parents know the desperate feeling of needing to go to work when a little one is not feeling well. The teachers are sympathetic with the situation, but we urge you to arrange back-up childcare for these situations. After an illness, children often appear healthy in the morning but are still not up to the vigorous activity of the Kindergarten. Please allow your child at least one full day of rest after an illness. If your child is ill, or will be absent for any other reason, please call the office to inform them that morning of the absence.

If a child must take medication at school, the medication and a medical authorization form, signed and dated by your health care provider (with full instructions) are to be given to the school office. Children may not carry medicine to school or keep it with them during the day – this includes vitamins and cough drops. Kindergarten teachers may not administer medicines. This may only be done at the health office.

Per State Law, students admitted at ages 4-6 years need these immunizations before starting their first day of kindergarten:

- Diphtheria, Tetanus and pertussis (DTaP, DTP or DT)- 5 doses. (4 doses OK if one was given on or after 4th birthday)
- Polio (OPV or IPV) – 4 doses. (3 doses OK if one was given on or after 4th birthday)

- Hepatitis B – 3 doses
- Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) – 2 doses. (Both given on or after 1st birthday)
- Varicella (Chickenpox) – 1 dose

Parents must show their child's Immunization Record as proof of immunization.

Parents may also choose

to have an exemption form signed by their child's health care provider (form CDPH 8262) if they choose not to immunize their child/ren.

Parent Participation

Parent volunteerism in the Kindergarten is much appreciated and encouraged. This can take a variety of forms: helping with handwork activities, washing laundry, take-home projects, helping with daily cleaning of the room. Please ask your teacher how you can help.

Visiting the Kindergarten

Parents are welcome to visit, and we appreciate advance notice so we can coordinate visitors and prevent the Kindergarten from becoming overcrowded with adults.

Because we are striving to create an environment where the child can freely create through art and play, we do not attempt to enter into their art or their play. Instead we stay in a place of warm observation, keeping our grown-up judgments out of their way. For the young child, the artistic process is more highly valued than the product.

When you are in the Kindergarten, please limit adult conversation to that which supports the rhythm of the day, and please understand that we enjoy a cell-phone-free environment. If questions about the Kindergarten arise, we can create time for adult conversation outside of class time. Our goal is to be present for the children.

We look forward to sharing our Kindergarten mornings with you!

Kindergarten Parent Gatherings

We will schedule a few gatherings for the parents of Kindergarten children. We encourage you to participate in these opportunities for learning more about your child's education here at Blue Oak. These educational meetings help create a loving community of adults surrounding all of the children of the Kindergarten.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences provide a means of strengthening the parent-teacher bond and deepening the teacher's understanding of the child. You have the opportunity to share impressions and concerns about your child as well as hear about your child's progress in school. Your teacher will schedule one conference with you each year. A second conference may also be arranged if you or your child's teacher feels it necessary to do so.

First Grade Readiness

There are many factors that help us all decide when a child is ready for the First Grade at Blue Oak School. The display of social and developmental readiness is the prime criterion. Children who have not yet turned six before June 1 generally remain for a second year of Kindergarten. However, there are many children who turn six between March and June who would benefit from a second year as well. Suggestions to this end are made with your child's best interests in mind.

The child entering Blue Oak School First Grade is most likely to have a productive and satisfying experience when he/she is fully ready. The demands of the First Grade have been seen to be very difficult for those children who did not show readiness during their previous Kindergarten year. It is recommended that your child be allowed to fully experience the wonder, rhythm, and life of the Kindergarten in order to firmly stand on his/her own in the First Grade and beyond. Early in the spring, the Kindergartens will host a parent meeting which addresses questions you might have regarding First Grade readiness.

Acknowledgments

This handbook was compiled with care by Blue Oak School's Kindergarten staff. Having referred to handbooks from other Kindergartens, we would like to thank Live Oak Charter School, Yuba River Charter School, Seattle Waldorf School, Aurora Waldorf School, Brightwater School, and Monterey Bay Charter School in particular for their assistance in our work.

Resources with which to begin...

You Are Your Child's First Teacher by Rahima Baldwin

The Magical Child and Evolutions' End both by Joseph Chilton Pierce

Endangered Minds, Your Child's Growing Mind and Failure to Connect all by Jane Healy

The Way of the Child by A.C. Harwood

Understanding Waldorf Education by Jack Petrash

Kindergarten Education by Betty Peck

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