



BLUE OAK SCHOOL
A WALDORF-INSPIRED PUBLIC CHARTER (K-8)

Kindergarten Handbook



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Welcome!

Welcome to Blue Oak School's Kindergarten Program. We hope this handbook may serve as a bridge between home and school as we partner to nurture and support your child. We recognize that the important work you do at home, as a parent is your job. In this handbook, we strive to offer ways in which you can support the Kindergarten program and your child's healthy development at home. Such advice is offered in the spirit of partnership and collaboration — not intended to be an overextension of our authority as teachers — as we work together to create healthy environments in which children can thrive. We thank you for prioritizing your time to learn more about the topics discussed in this guide. We welcome your questions, comments and concerns. Please read this handbook, as well as Blue Oak's Parent Handbook, and keep it as a reference throughout the year.

With warmth and gratitude,

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Philosophy and Curriculum

Our Kindergartens are based on an understanding of child development in which the child between birth and age seven develops and learns through imitation and imaginative play. Young children are open to every impression in their environment, absorbing the world through their senses and responding in the most active mode of knowing – imitation.

We strive to create a beautiful home-like environment worthy of imitation: a protected childhood space where the imagination and creativity of the child will flourish and where their inherent capacities are nurtured.

Just as a child lives in a rhythmical life of waking and sleeping, we also work with a regular rhythm for our daily and weekly activities including: creative play using simple wooden toys and basic play materials, music and verse accompanied by movement and gesture, nature stories and fairy tales, practical activities of gardening, baking, sewing, washing and folding, artistic activities of coloring and painting, and spending time in nature. Allowing the children's imaginations and creativity to develop in Kindergarten creates a foundation for academics and a lifelong love of learning.

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. This helps the child begin a path toward personal responsibility and respect for others.

As each day unfolds in an unhurried way through established rhythm, the children gain 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 builds 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 Waldorf-inspired education provided by Blue Oak applies a more moderately paced approach to reading instruction and formal academics than traditional public schools. Here, Kindergarten is a time to develop sensory integration through movement, art, music, free play and other readiness instruction. In the Kindergarten, children are building their capacities for literacy through language-rich circle activities, intentional movement, and linguistically rich storytelling. This allows for a gradual and multi-sensory preparation for reading. Direct instruction in letter/sound correspondence is brought through the images embedded in the Grimm's Fairy Tales in the First Grade. From there, Blue Oak students begin more traditional reading instruction, and in Grades 2-4 students are in leveled reading groups, to support their growth in ability and love for literacy. This gradual approach comes to full fruition by the end of Third Grade. Please be aware of this when considering any future change in the educational placement of your child.

Preparing for the First Day

Home Visits

Home visits typically occur during the summer before school begins, and help to build a bridge between home and school. They provide a chance for children to delight in having their teacher for a short visit to show her their room and treasures and to introduce siblings and pets, creating a special teacher-child bond. They are a treat for the teacher as well.

Kindergarten Hours

Monday - Friday, 8:30 - 12:30

Please be prompt for arrival and pick up. Thank you!

** Supervision begins at 8 am on the Kindergarten playground.*

What To Bring

A full change of clothing, all labeled with your child's first and last name. Your child should always have a seasonably appropriate change of clothes available at school, including socks and underwear. Please check regularly.

Helpful Hint If your child is feeling anxious about going to school, a suggestion might be to tell your child a simple bedtime story for three nights in a row, before school begins. The story could be about a little animal that lives in the forest and is getting ready to go to school. Create a story that is relevant to your child; for example, choose an animal your child is most like: Is 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? Integrate your own personal life into the story – (e.g., 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 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.

Helpful Hint On the first day of school, we recommend a quick good-bye to ease the transition. Show confidence in your child's ability to make this transition successfully. If you have questions or concerns, please speak with your child's teacher directly.

Life at Home

As your child enters school, we ask you to consider and prioritize: sleep, nutrition, limited media, living arts, and social development. Understanding and supporting these will ease your child's transition to school and give your child a gift for life.

Sleep and Bedtimes

Young, growing children need 11 to 12 hours of uninterrupted sleep every night. Please create consistently early bedtimes; we recommend bedtime at 7pm, wake up at 7am. Early bedtimes go hand-in-hand with early meal times. Having a consistent bedtime ritual (one story, a song or verse, a candle) helps to get young children to bed on time with a feeling of security.

Helpful Hint Consider establishing a pre-bedtime. For example, pajama time and lights down a half-hour before bedtime, depending on your family's routine.

Food for Thought

<https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-topics/children-and-sleep>

Nutrition

“Breakfast like a giant, lunch like a gnome, and dinner like a fairy.” A breakfast with some protein stabilizes blood sugar and energy levels. Sugary breakfasts cause the body to release too much insulin, followed by a blood sugar drop. The result is an overactive, emotionally out-of-balance child, who may struggle to pay attention and learn. We also encourage sitting with your child during breakfast and sharing a meal together.

Food for Thought

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15883552>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3737458/>

Limited Media

Most parents are drawn to our school because of our unique pedagogy, philosophy, and shared values. The philosophy of Blue Oak School is based on an understanding of the developing child. While television and other media can serve as a source of information and entertainment for adults, children do not operate in the same developmental stage as adults. External, artificial images inhibit the viewer's inner picture-making ability, which limits the developing capacity for our thoughts and imagination. Developing this capacity is the cornerstone of Waldorf education. The nature of electronic light, swiftness of images, and the quality of sound of television, computers, and videos can adversely affect the healthy development of the child.

Recent research, including that of the American Academy of Pediatrics, on the effects of exposure to electronic media cites resulting learning and behavioral disorders, sleep disturbances, and physiological damage. Research also shows that exposure to media entertainment for young children may have a detrimental effect on their self-image, their ability to concentrate and develop attention span, their relationship skills, values, reading skills, physical skills, energy levels, psychological health, creativity, and social behavior.

Because we believe that the impact of the electronic media can have detrimental effects on a child's healthy growth and development, we encourage families to incorporate our media-free philosophy into their children's daily lives. We respectfully ask that you turn your TV and all other screen activity OFF for the next few years. We realize that limiting

or eliminative media from your child's life may feel like a tall order. However, with support and reassurance, families may find that more free time means more creative and quality time together. Additionally, we strive to educate our parents about issues that stem from media exposure and to offer alternatives to media and encourage real, candid, open, and nonjudgmental conversations between parents and teachers regarding media.

Food for Thought

http://www.familysafemedia.com/alternatives_to_tv_handbook.html

Living Arts

Much learning takes place when children are invited to participate in practical and domestic activities: folding clothes, setting the table, cleaning, meal preparation, laundry, pet care, gardening, sewing, sweeping, and woodwork. We encourage you to invite your child to work by your side at this young age to lay the foundation for healthy habits and independent chores. Also, involving your child in these activities can help ease the transition to limiting media.

Social Development

Cooperative, imaginative group experiences that focus on the joy of movement meet the physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of young children. We suggest that you postpone involvement in competitive and/or organized sports or performance oriented activities, as they awaken a competitive spirit and a self-consciousness in young children that is better delayed to a later stage of development.

Food for Thought

<http://www.movementforchildhood.com/uploads/2/1/6/7/21671438/teams.pdf>

Life at School

Rhythm

The rhythm of the Kindergarten day reflects the child's need for regular cycles of activity and quiet, a sense of "breathing out" (vigorous play or work) to "breathing in" (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 young children can immerse themselves.

Daily Rhythm (example)

8:30	Arrival and Outdoor Free Play
9:00	Gather and Transition to Circle Time
9:30	Group Activity
9:45	Transition to Indoor Free Play
10:30	Clean Up
10:50	Snack
11:30	Wash Dishes and Transition to Outdoor Free Play
12:10	Gather and Story Time
12:30	Closing Verse and Dismissal

Weekly Rhythm (example)

Monday	Painting / Rice & Beans and Vegetable
Tuesday	Handwork / Oatmeal and Fruit
Wednesday	Drawing / Quinoa and Fruit or Vegetable
Thursday	Vegetable Chopping / Soup, Chips and Cheese
Friday	Bread Shaping / Bread and Fruit

Arrival

Kindergarten begins at 8:30am with outdoor free play, which is an integral part of our curriculum. Timeliness strengthens the will and therefore supports your child and the whole class. Tardiness breaks this special morning routine and does not allow children the needed time to transition from the drive to school to integrating with their classmates. For your child's sake and that of the class, **please arrive by 8:30**, sign in your child upon arrival, and have your child put their belongings away.

If you are tardy, please check in at the office before accompanying your child to class. If you arrive during morning circle, please wait with your child outside the classroom until invited in by the teacher.

Morning is often when we are most sensitive. Being not long out of sleep and dreamland makes children open to influences around us. Young children especially need to wake slowly and gently. We recommend a calm morning, with a healthy breakfast, and without

rushing. We also recommend that your child's morning be free of television, radio, and media so they can be receptive to the world around them when they arrive at school.

Our play yard and classrooms will be open and supervised beginning at 8am. **Teachers are not available to supervise or receive children before 8am. Only children supervised by an adult may be in the Kindergarten yard before 8am.**

Helpful Hint Morning arrival presents a valuable time for parents to meet with one another and perhaps arrange play times outside of school.

Dismissal

The Kindergarten program does not include lunch and ends at 12:30 pm. Please be sure to connect with your child's teacher before you leave. Please arrive promptly to give your child the wonderful, secure feeling that you are there at the end of the school day. It is essential that you pick up your child on time, as the after school program is not offered on a drop-in basis. Children not picked up on time will be taken to the office and emergency contacts will be notified.

If someone other than the parent/guardian is going to pick up your child, please make sure they are listed on the emergency contact form in the office, and please inform the teacher with a written note.

If there is a day when you need to pick up your child before the normal release time, please let your child's teacher know that morning, and sign your child out in the office before picking them up.

Blue Oak School participates in Chico Unified School District's federal free and reduced lunch program (served outside of Kindergarten hours). For information please call 530-891-3021 x203. Please note, food served by this program must be eaten on campus.

After School Program

Chico Area Recreation District (CARD) offers an After School Program at Blue Oak. Information is available on Blue Oak's website, by calling CARD's office, or by visiting their website:

<http://www.chicorec.com/CARD-Programs/Kids-on-Campus-After-School-Program/index.html>.

Cell Phone Use on Campus

In alignment with our shared core values of a media-free environment at school, we ask that there be no cell phone use (talking, texting, emailing, taking or sharing photos, etc.) on campus at arrival and dismissal times. Please allow this important transition time and your full attention to be devoted to being with your child at the beginning and end of their school day.

We also request that adult volunteers refrain from cell phone use, and move out of sight and hearing if an emergency call/text must be taken. We thank you for your support as we strive to create a reverent, relational space for children, free from the distractions and over-stimulation of our modern world.

Attendance and Absences

Daily attendance is important for the young child, as it helps build a strong rhythm and demonstrates the importance of school. Further, regular attendance supports your child's social development and the unity of the class. Children who miss more than five days in a school year are more likely to struggle with developing the important skills and concepts needed for reading, math, and other areas of learning.

When a student is absent it reduces school funding by approximately \$40 a day, regardless of the reason for the absence. State funding based on attendance is vital to our school's operating budget and fiscal health. We ask that you schedule family vacations to coincide with school vacations and that doctor appointments be scheduled after school. If you think your child is going to be ill for more than one day, or if you need to travel out of town for more than one day, you can sign up for Independent Study through the front office. The school will then receive the funding and it will help the student stay in rhythm with the class.

Establishing good habits in Kindergarten supports success in school and in life. Additionally, when adults have a good relationship with punctuality and attendance, then our children learn reliability and respect for others. If you find punctuality a challenge, please speak with your child's teacher for assistance with strategies to support being on time.

*If your child must be absent, please notify the school office: 530-879-7483 ext 2005.
Or you can email attendance@blueoakcharterschool.org*

Health and Illness

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 illnesses as they grow. The lively Kindergartens are not soothing environments for a sick child. Please arrange your life 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. 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. Independent study can easily be arranged in advance for absences of two days or more.

If a child must take medication at school, the medication and a physician's note, signed and dated, with full instructions, must be given to the school office, to be kept in the Health Aide's care. Children may not carry medicine to school or keep it with them during the day – this includes vitamins, chapstick, and cough drops. Kindergarten teachers may not administer medicines. This may only be done at the front office.

Please read Blue Oak's Parent Handbook for further details on our school's health policy.

A Note from our 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.

Allergies and Dietary Concerns

After providing the office with pertinent allergy information, please provide written information about your child's allergies to your child's teacher before the first day of school.

If your child is allergic to certain foods that we serve, such as wheat/gluten or dairy, you may provide an alternative bread or birthday treat which we will store in the freezer. Please clearly label the treats with your child's first and last name.

Food

Food is one of the best ways we have to direct the health, behavior, and moods of our young children. In Kindergarten, the children often help prepare a wholesome and hearty snack of various grains (rice, oats, quinoa, wheat, corn); fresh, organic fruits or vegetables; cheese and/or nuts/seeds. Our mealtime together includes a blessing and table manners, and is considered a whole-group activity. Unless allergies are being accommodated, we share in the same meal. Please inform your teacher and the office if your child has any dietary restrictions and/or allergies.

Your monetary donations support this meaningful program. Please make efforts to contribute before the school year begins. Donations can be made at the office, or on our website, <http://blueoakcharterschool.org>.

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

Birthdays

Birthdays are very special in Kindergarten. The teachers regard your child's presence in the Kindergarten as a gift, and are grateful for the opportunity to express our appreciation on their birthday. The unique birthday ceremony given by your teacher will be a memorable occasion for your child. Parents/guardians are encouraged to attend. Your child's teacher will provide you with details regarding the timing and activities for birthday celebrations in your child's class.

In order to preserve the reverence for the celebration and to allow all to "live in the moment", we ask that no cameras be used during the celebration. You may take pictures at the end of the celebration.

When giving invitations for a birthday party outside of school, unless the whole class is invited, we ask that parents/guardians distribute invitations to other parents/guardians to avoid children's hurt feelings. Children are very sensitive about being included in birthday parties.

Seasonal Celebrations and Festivals

Celebration of the seasons lies at the heart of the Kindergarten. Our celebrations focus on nature's changing processes. The children learn songs and verses chosen for that time of year, make seasonal crafts, and bake special treats. Stories nurture a pictorial understanding of nature's processes and speak deeply to children without our needing to explain.

Each Kindergarten has a nature table that offers a way for the children to note the seasonal changes taking place outdoors. Children love the items adorning the nature table, and often bring flowers or stones that they have found to add to what the teacher has provided for the season.

Helpful Hint Offer your child a small table or windowsill to create their own nature table at home, with natural items gathered from walks or outings. It is wonderful to share a nature story with your child of an experience you remember from your own childhood, highlighting a particular season. Share the colors, smells, sounds, and activities that you remember, for example, a trip to the ocean or tide pools, harvesting apples in the fall, planting a garden. Share your personal experience through the eyes of a young child.

Blue Oak School celebrates wonderful events and festivals each year: the Harvest Festival; Lantern Walk (for the younger children through grade two); Thanksgiving; Festival of Lights; and May Day and the May Faire. For the young child, preparation for the upcoming season or festival is full of joyful anticipation, and they delight in seeing their parents' participation.

Clothing

Kindergarten is a place of active work and play. For your child's comfort and enjoyment of the morning, please send them in clothing that you will not be worried about keeping clean or stain free. We also ask that it be free of logos, lights, media, and such. Footwear should be firm around the foot and easy for children to take on and off themselves. Flip-flops are not allowed at school.

We will be outside every day, rain and shine. We believe there is no such thing as "bad" weather; it is wonderful to observe and interact with nature in all kinds of weather. Keeping the young child's body warm with clothing is essential for their health and well-being. Before the age of seven, children may not sense their need for warmth and will need an adult's support dressing in layers which may be removed as the day grows warmer.

When mornings are cool, we recommend 4 layers:

- 1 - undershirt, leggings under skirt/dress
- 2 - long-sleeved shirt or dress
- 3 - sweater or sweatshirt
- 4 - jacket or raincoat

Please label all clothing and gear with your child's first and last name, especially outer layers.

Please bring a seasonally appropriate change of clothing, also 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 they can easily move and play.

We have a small supply of extra clothing for the children to borrow as the need arises.

Please check the lost and found periodically for lost clothes. Clothing left in the lost and found is donated to charity in December and June.

Easing Separation Anxiety

As the children begin the school year, and possibly the new experience of school, some may experience difficulty separating from parents at arrival time. Please know we are here to support this important transition. Each child will approach goodbyes uniquely. Some handle the separation fairly well, some show signs of distress and settle down shortly, and others are extremely upset with parting. It can vary with the child's age, their ability to deal with change in general, with the parent who is bringing them to school, and with stresses in their life outside of school.

Helpful Hint

- Demonstrate trust and confidence in the teacher and in the decision you have made on your child's behalf. Your child's teacher is experienced with helping families with this transition and offering a safe, nurturing experience for your child.
- Make partings brief. A quick goodbye and departure is recommended. Prolonging parting prolongs the adjustment and the accompanying crying or tantrums.
- Assure your child that you will return, and leave them with a hug and a confident smile.

Toys

Please have your child keep their own toys and other personal belongings at home. Sometimes toys like to hide in pockets or backpacks and come to school. We find that these items distract children at school, so please work with your child to make sure these items stay safely at home or in the car. If a toy does come to school, we will have the toy “rest” in a safe spot, and go home at the end of the day.

Likewise, school toys should remain at school. If a Kindergarten toy does travel home, please know that we welcome its return to the classroom where it can play with all the children.

Unless your child is being picked up by another parent/guardian or caretaker, bringing a backpack is not necessary and is discouraged.

Sometimes children like to bring something to show the class. In this case, they can check with the teacher. We ask that items to share be from nature or homemade by your child.

Parent-Teacher Communication

It is essential for the healthy development and care of your child that parents and teachers communicate directly and effectively. **We strive to be a team and encourage you to come directly to us with your questions and concerns.** While teachers are not able to have extensive conversations before school, we are happy to arrange a time to give you our full attention. It is through working together that we can best meet the needs of you and your child.

Food for Thought

<http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf>

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Your teacher will schedule one conference with you each year. Here we will have an opportunity to meet and discuss your child’s Kindergarten experience and share observations, impressions, questions, and goals to deepen our shared understanding of your child, as well as strengthen our work together.

We 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. Please make an appointment any time it is needed.

Kindergarten Parent Meetings

Parent meetings are scheduled throughout the year for parents only. An important part of your school experience, these offerings provide parents with the opportunity to learn more about Waldorf education, while strengthening our community of parents and teachers. **It is essential that at least one parent from each family attend these meetings.** Your child's teacher will inform you of the dates.

Parent Participation & Adult Etiquette

Parent participation in the life of the school takes many different forms and is essential to our school's success. Whether providing support in the Kindergarten, on a field trip, in the garden, on a committee, or at a festival, parent volunteers provide much needed and valued assistance. Thank you for giving your time and sharing your experience with our classes!

Parent help in the Kindergarten classroom is much appreciated and encouraged: helping with handwork, painting, and soup-preparation activities; washing dishes; washing laundry; watering the play yard; helping with take-home projects; and helping with daily cleaning of the room and yard. Please ask your teacher how you can help.

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

We would like to offer a few guidelines for your visit to ensure the optimum environment is created for the children. Our goal is to be present for the children and to create a space for them to fully live their imaginations.

Movement — The young child is looking for movements and gestures to imitate, be it sewing, cutting vegetables, or setting the table. Let us pay attention to our posture and demonstrate gestures that are meaningful and beautiful. To accomplish this usually means we only need to slow down and deepen our breathing.

Speech — Statements are preferred over questions. Words are spoken simply and with care. It is pleasant to work quietly, perhaps humming softly. 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.

Dress — Please be prepared to remove outdoor footwear when in the classroom. Because they can be distracting for the young child, please minimize perfume, cosmetics, and jewelry to your comfort level.

Interaction with Children — 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 activities. 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.

We look forward to sharing our Kindergarten mornings with you!

Discipline for the Young Child

Kindergarten children, like all human beings, exhibit a wide variety of skills and challenges. In the Waldorf Kindergarten, teachers strive to 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. Positivity and encouragement are always the best path in response to behavior challenges of young children. In general, the teacher provides guidance by modeling appropriate behavior with the children and with other adults. Positive redirection often works in areas where modeling does not. Much of the communication between teacher and child happens publicly, in front of the other children, so they receive the same message. In cases of “bullying” behaviors, the teacher works with all the students involved. The teacher may work with parents to create consistency between home and school.

Incidents involving physical aggression such as biting, hitting, kicking, or severe tantrums are taken seriously and addressed promptly. If your child is having difficulty with aggressive behaviors, please let your child’s teacher know **before** an incident occurs to establish consistent methods of discipline both at home and at school.

Food for Thought

“The young child instinctively expects guidance. Without the certainty of his parents and teachers he loses 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.”

–Margaret Meyerkort, internationally respected kindergarten educator

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 children who turn six in April or May who would benefit from a second year as well. We will make recommendations, with your child’s best interests in mind, and address questions at your parent-teacher conference.

It is important to know that this is not considered “retention”, but part of a developmental program. We recognize that children do not develop and mature at the same rate. A child’s chronological age and/or academic readiness are not enough to determine First Grade readiness. We look at three major developmental areas as we near the end of the school year: gross motor; fine motor, and social-emotional development.

Children entering First Grade are most likely to have a productive and satisfying experience when they are 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 their own in the First Grade and beyond.

Learning More About Waldorf Education and Child Development

Parents and educators alike regard children with wonder and interest. What is the true nature of the child? The wisdom and experience of the body of literature on child development and Waldorf education can help us come to a clearer understanding of our children. There is a wealth of pertinent books available through various bookstores and small publishing companies, to which the teachers would be happy to direct you.

“Waldorf Education places the development of the individual child in the focal point, convinced that the healthy individual is a prerequisite for a healthy society.”

–The International Conference on Education of the United Nations Educational and Scientific Cultural Organization

Organizations and Online Resources

<https://waldorfeducation.org>

<http://www.allianceforpublicwaldorfeducation.org>

<http://www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org>

<http://waldorflibrary.org>

Recommended Books

Simplicity Parenting by Kim John Payne

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

Seven Times the Sun by Shea Darian

Over the Rainbow Bridge by Patterson & Bradley

Your Five Year Old by Louise Bates Ames

Your Six Year Old by Louise Bates Ames

Your Seven Year Old by Louise Bates Ames

Raising Boys by Steve Biddulph and Paul Stanish

Parenting Well in the Media Age by Gloria DeGaetano

Positive Discipline by Jane Nelson

Waldorf Education, A Family Guide by Fenner and Rivers

Videos

“Why Waldorf?”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZmAX5adCl0>

“The Gift of Learning”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MDSYxFpqqxs>

“Educating Children for the Journey: Jack Petrash at TedxRockCreekPark”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imaW-TabxOE>

Films

“The Challenge of Rudolf Steiner” <http://rudolfsteinerfilm.squarespace.com>

10 Needs for a Healthy Childhood and Educational Experience

1: Proper Nutrition

A good, hot, nutritious breakfast every day before school. Breakfast, snack and lunch should contain lots of protein, and no sugar or food additives.

2: Adequate Sleep

Be in bed no later than 8:00pm on school nights. Most young children need 10-12 hours of sleep each night.

3: Eliminate Media

No computer, TV, video games, or other screen time on Sundays through Thursdays. No murder, mayhem, or adult movies or videos on the weekend, ever.

4: Quiet Time

Provide some daily quiet time, without radio, CDs, or tapes. Give your child the gift of silence.

5: Time in Nature

Spend some time in nature every day. Experience the weather; pay attention to the seasons, moon, stars, and sky.

6: Chores at Home

Assign some responsibilities for taking care of the home, pets, and yard.

7: Appropriate Dress

Pay attention to keeping your child warm and dry while at school, especially their feet.

8: Cultivate Reverence

All spiritual traditions offer practices that help develop the reverence for life that supports home, school, and community relationships. If need be, create your own.

9: Support Your Child's Education

Help develop healthy homework habits, participate in school activities, and communicate honestly about your concerns with your child's teachers.

10: Support Your Class Community

Get to school on time. Plan vacations during breaks. Support the class code of conduct. Children need shared values and alignment among their adult role models.

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Found at:

<http://www.allianceforpublicwaldorfeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/10NeedsForHealthyChildhood.pdf>

Gift Ideas for Young Children

The best gifts for young children can be natural, inexpensive, reused, and found in your home or at thrift stores.

Tool Box or Belt — with small hand tools, nails, drill, hammer, and screwdriver

Basket of Wood Scraps

Hand-Made Doll — a cradle, or simple bedding made from fabric scraps

Basket with Fabrics & Yarn — felt, wool fleece, cotton or wool yarn

Art & Craft Materials — drawing paper, crayons, scissors, beeswax, clay, and paints

Treasure Sack — with marbles, crystals, gems, polished stones, acorns, and shells

Gardening Tools — seeds, trowel, rake, and shovel

Fabrics — silk, cotton, and gauze of various sizes, for dress-up and plays

China Tea Set — wooden bowls, spoons

Apron — for working or dressing up

Dress-Ups — hats, crowns, capes, and silks

Kite

Rope — for jumping, tug-of-war, practice tying, or “cat’s cradle”

Kinder Harp/Lyre

Acknowledgments

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