



Eugene Waldorf
SCHOOL

Early Childhood Handbook
2019-2020

Dear Early Childhood Family,

This handbook has been created to serve as a bridge between the home and the classroom, as we work side by side to create healthy environments in which the children can thrive. Please read it and keep it as a reference during the year. We invite you to communicate your questions and concerns as they arise.

With Warmth,

The Early Childhood Faculty
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The Eugene Waldorf School is an accredited full member of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) and the Waldorf Early Childhood Association (WECAN) and is licensed by the State of Oregon. Our lead teachers have their Waldorf teaching certificate and continue their education and explorations of the wonders of early childhood.

About our Program

The Eugene Waldorf School Early Childhood Program nurtures and helps develop the growing child's senses, imagination and awareness of self and others, in a nurturing, rhythmical and homelike environment. The program is structured to provide age appropriate activities for all of the children. All the classes offer a daily routine while encouraging individual growth through practical life skills, artistic opportunities and creative play. As their age and ability progresses, the activities shift to meet their growth. Our program is formed to provide a gradual transition from the life of the home to the structure of school. It is based on the simple yet profound concepts of imitation, repetition and creative play. The German word Kindergarten means "children's garden" or "garden of children". This is the image that we choose to carry on behalf of the young child: a place where childhood is considered a valid and honorable experience.

Parent and child classes provide support and enrichment for parents with children from infancy to four years old. In a nurturing and beautiful environment, children are given opportunities to explore, play and socialize. Teachers inspire the whole child—head, heart and hands—by encouraging movement, and developing imagination and language skills through songs, verses, stories and puppet shows. Please see the office and/or online registration for classes.

Preschool classes are for children ages 2 1/2-4 years old. The preschool is often the very first experience the young child has in a school setting. With this awareness, the preschool has an especially gentle, home-like environment where young children can feel safe and begin to establish a relationship with new adults and children in their lives. To help with this gradual transition, the preschool offers two, three, four or five day attendance options.

Kindergarten classes are for the 4-6 year old children. The home-like environment continues to be essential as it provides a supportive environment for the continued social and physical growth in a familial-like setting. The experiences and skills that were nurtured and naturally encouraged in the preschool are deepened through the activities brought by the teachers as well as the dynamic development of this age group. Non-competitiveness is a foundation in the kindergarten, while individual growth and discovery is honored. Depending on the age of the child, there are three, four or five day attendance options. Five days a week is required for children already six years old or turning six during the school year.

Robin's Nest classes are the early childhood afternoon program. This class, a mixture of both the kindergartens and the preschool classes, provides an extension of the morning programs. At the end of morning class, the children continuing for the afternoon, gather to enjoy lunch, rest, story and play time together. Children attending the Robin's Nest must be signed up in advance through the office staff or online in the BigSis Parent Portal and must bring a lunch from home.

Foundational Activities

Alphabetical list

Artistic and Craft Activity

Many artistic opportunities are brought to the children. Wet on wet watercolor painting, bun making, crayon drawing along with many seasonal crafts are part of the early childhood curriculum. Children develop beginning sewing, finger knitting and woodworking skills. These activities not only help develop fine motor skills, but lay the foundation for artistic techniques and abilities along with developing a sense of beauty, form and color.

Birthdays

Birthdays are a well-loved and honored celebration in the classroom! How the birthdays are celebrated varies depending on the classroom. The key components are a story, singing, gifts of nature from the child's classmates and a handmade gift from the teacher. Your child's teacher will contact you when your child's birthday draws near for preparations. Here is a verse that can be said to your child the evening before the birthday:

When I have said my evening prayer
And my clothes are folded on the chair
When ____ (mother, father, grandmother, etc) switches off the light
I'll still be ___ years old tonight.
But from the very break of day
Before the children rise and play
Before the darkness turns to gold
Tomorrow I'll be ___ years old.
___ kisses when I wake!
___ candles on my cake!

Circle Time

During our class time, the children and teachers gather for circle time. Circle time is "a moving story" influenced by fairy and nature stories, rhymes, verses, songs and the season. Our circle time is composed of directed movements to meet the need of physical development of spatial orientation, gross and fine motor movements and balance. Also, the repeating and remembering of songs and verses brings much needed repetition for healthy brain development as does directed movement. The beginning of spelling, phonics and education of listening and speaking is greatly influenced by rhyming sounds and alliteration that are brought in poems and verses as well as story.

Creative Play Time

Play is a valuable part of our morning and is the basis of wholesome development and numerous healthy activities. The classroom environment provides natural materials that are purposefully open-ended to leave the imagination free to create and for the child to follow their own initiative. Children have the opportunities for integrating

their life experiences, practicing life skills, building social and emotional relationships, sensory integration and free movement. During play time, the teachers are involved with the practical work and activities of the classroom, while helping to redirect play when necessary and to integrate children into the classroom tasks.

Festivals

The festival life is an integral part of the early childhood program and the school community. Much of the joy of the festivals is in the preparations and anticipation, as each festival involves its own special decorating, handcrafts, songs, stories and verses. The festival is also reflected on our nature tables which are a feature in each classroom. We adhere to pictorial understanding of the festivals rather than explanations as this is what nourishes the young child. The festivals and their meaning will be brought to the parent meetings.

Life Arts

Domestic (ex: cleaning, organizing, cooking, repairing) and self care skills (ex: hand washing, bathroom needs, hair brushing) are considered a high art in the classroom. This lays a foundation for organizational abilities, sequencing and, later, ordered, clear thinking, along with being very capable of taking care of one's own self, one's environment and others.

Music

During class time, singing is a feature throughout the children's morning. The teachers bring specific songs to circle time, story, transitions and games. They help mark the seasons and festivals, develop a sense of rhythm and naturally enhance memory skills. Songs bring a sense of harmony and invite the child's participation. Simple instruments such as kinder-harps, glockenspiels and chimes can also be heard and experienced in the classroom.

Outdoor Play

A good portion of our morning is devoted to outdoor time. And, only the harshest weather will keep us inside! We are all nourished by nature and the child's growing senses require the natural world for healthy development. Whether it is the changing leaves, mud puddles, sparkling frost or flower buds, the experiences and interactions with the natural world make deep impressions on the children. Nature provides much fodder for the imagination and the growing child, along with shaping observation skills and forming relationships with plants, animals and the weather.

Rhythm

Rhythm is natural part of our lives; the rhythmic cycle of the seasons, the rhythmic cycle of waking and sleeping, the rhythm of breathing in our bodies are but a few examples. The early childhood program upholds a daily rhythm as not only important, but an essential part of life at home and at school. Children thrive when embraced in a rhythmic lifestyle as it reflects the natural order of life. Your child's teacher will provide a copy of the classroom rhythm.

Though our lives are busy and bringing routine can sometimes seem a daunting task, rhythm is a dear friend to your family. We highly encourage and want to support your family in its implementation. Eating an early supper can help bedtime be early. We recommend a bedtime as early as 7pm and no later than 8pm. Your teacher can help you with ideas.

Snack Time

Gratitude and appreciation are an integral part of the social life at school. This lifelong social skill, along with mannerliness, is especially expressed at snack time when we gather to eat together. Sitting family-style, we begin by expressing gratitude for our food through a song or spoken blessing. After we have eaten, we close with a "thank you" verse. Your child's teacher will provide a list of the daily snack offerings.

Story Time

Each day, the children are told an oral story by their teacher. The story is often accompanied by a puppet show, especially in the preschool, and sometimes a play, a feature in the kindergarten. Children develop the ability to sit, listen and experience the story which is selected by the teacher according to the ages and overall development of the group, richness of language, the season and festival. Story time lays a foundation for future literacy, an expansive vocabulary, love for language and the spoken word.

Verses and Blessings

An abundance of verses, songs and blessings are shared with your child at school and many will be shared with you at parent meetings.

Guidelines, Procedures and School Supplies

Alphabetical list

Afternoon care

The Robin's Nest early childhood afternoon program is available from 12:30 p.m. until 3:00 p.m. Children must be signed up in advance (please see the office) and bring their own lunch. Food guidelines along with what your child will need for the afternoon program will be provided by the Robin's Nest teacher. If your child needs additional care at school (please see the office), there is an after school option care available from 3:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m.

Arrival

The school doors open and the teachers are ready to welcome your children at 8:10 a.m. Our school morning officially begins at 8:25 a.m.

We recognize that morning can be a sensitive time, especially for young children. Some children awaken quite early, while others need to be awoken to have plenty of time to orient to the day and prepare for their school day. Emphasizing "plenty of time" can be very helpful as morning brings a beautiful sensitivity and openness in us, it can also be overwhelming if we have to make a quick transition from home to school.

Please consider drop off as a special moment for you and your child; a short time, yet a moment to really touch in with them and then have a clear moment to extend your trust to your child's teacher and be able to say goodbye. We also understand that there be the occasional difficult morning whether it is the transition to school or at drop time and we will do our best to support your family.

We ask that you closely accompany them to the building. Also, as children grow more comfortable with coming to school and feel more independent, sometimes they ask to come into the school building by themselves. We ask that you continue to walk them into the building and still have a goodbye. They can practice their independence getting themselves ready for the classroom in the cubby room. And, there are plenty of years ahead for them to go independently to their classrooms!

Afternoon Departure

The preschool and kindergarten morning programs end at 12:30 p.m. Children may only be released to those listed on their emergency/contact lists. If you need to add someone that was not listed at the beginning of the school year, please contact the office in person or by phone at 541-683-6951. If someone comes for your child that is not listed on your child's release form and we have not received noticed from you, your child will not be released.

Attendance

Please call the school at 541-683-6951 if your child will be arriving later in the morning or will be absent. The office staff will give a message to the teachers.

Clothing

School time involves work and play! Please help your child dress in comfortable, practical and sturdy clothing. Also, natural fibers encourage a healthy sense of touch, warmth and breath-ability of the skin. Please dress your child in layers for warmth and variable weather. Likewise, in cool weather, we support the children wearing cotton, silk or woolen long underwear. Warmth safeguards health on many levels. We ask that children do not wear media-inspired clothing. When it is warm enough for short sleeve shirts we ask that the sleeves are long enough to cover the children's shoulders.

- Extra clothes bags are provided at your child's cubby. We ask that a full set of clothes including a short sleeve and a long sleeve shirt, pants, underwear and socks are available. Please check them regularly to refill them and replace them to fit your growing child. It is a more welcoming site for children, who slipped in a puddle or arrived late to the bathroom, to see their own clothes to change into.

Comfort Kits

In case of a short-term emergency, we ask that each child brings the following items placed in a gallon-sized Ziploc bag:

Non-perishable food items:

granola/protein bars
small package unsalted nuts
and socks
small package crackers or similar
note of comfort
canned juice, coconut water, etc.
(emergency rain poncho)
small water bottle
fruit leather
pencil and drawing pad

For comfort:

small stuffed animal
extra underwear
family photo and
one garbage bag
space blanket
small book or

Please clearly label the bag with your child's name and bring it to first day of school. We will store the kits and return them at the end of the school year.

Communication

As we all journey through the school together, we will have much experience and growth together. It is likely that you will have questions, concerns, need clarification and conversations. Though the kindergarten morning does not offer a platform for open adult conversation, we can create time for open, earnest conversations. Please get in touch with your child's lead teacher when this need arises.

First Grade Readiness

Children must be six years of age by June 1st, and developmentally ready, in order to attend First Grade the following school year. In the spring, a Waldorf teacher, trained in remedial and observation work, helps determine First Grade Readiness. Eugene Waldorf School will make the final decision on a student's advancement to First Grade.

Guidance and Discipline

As teachers devoted to early childhood, we strive to understand the true nature of each child. We work strongly to create a healthy outer rhythm for the child that allows an appropriate balance between "breathing in" and "breathing out" activities to create an environment where the young child's gifts can unfold. Thus harmonizing the child's development by providing opportunities for physical activity, providing warmth and

feelings of security, serving wholesome food, providing behavioral boundaries, time for imaginative play, practical tasks and presenting hand work and games. Children learn a great deal through imitation and positive role models. We provide positive role modeling through guidance, instruction and redirecting when difficult interactions arise.

We also recognize that transitions can be difficult and as children progress through developmental stages different, and sometimes surprising, behaviors can arise. Sometimes children need to have a break from the larger group, to have time to become quiet, have guidance or do a special task with a teacher. Generally, these moments last a short time and the teacher helps, if need be, the child integrate back into the group. If such circumstances are reoccurring, your child's teacher will let you know. In situations where behavior is consistently disruptive and/or distressed or there are developmental concerns, your child's teacher will work with you to help form a care plan and/or suggest some professional assistance outside of school.

Health and Illness

Health is highly dependent on ample rest, a wholesome diet and warmth. Children are at their best when these basic components are balanced, yet illness is also normal. Ill children need to stay at home, as it is the best place for them to be cared for to be nursed through their illness. The classrooms are active places and not an appropriate place for an ailing child. In the case your child becomes ill, is distressed or under rested during school, we will first contact your family. If the your child's family has not been reached, the emergency contacts will be notified.

Please help protect the health of the class by keeping your child home if they have a colored discharge, constant cough, diarrhea, fever, symptoms that display a communicable disease. Children should be given 24 hours after an illness to rest at home before returning to school. To return to class, children must be without fever, vomiting or diarrhea for a full 24 hours.

If your child has contracted a communicable disease, please let the office and teacher know so that the class can be advised of the illness and its symptoms. In the case that your child has been exposed to a communicable disease, but is not displaying symptoms, please still let the office and teacher know so that the class can in be informed of what symptoms may appear.

Home Visits

Your child's teacher will contact you about scheduling a time to visit your child at your family's home. We have experienced home visits as a wonderful time to bridge the home and school. It also offers an opportunity for the teacher and child to connect outside of school. For the teacher it is a delight to experience the child's home and what they enjoy doing, meet their family members and pets, see their favorite toys and anything else they might share during the visit. We hope for it to be enriching experience for the child, parent(s) and teacher.

Media

We have found that media and screen time is counterproductive to what we, in the early childhood program, are trying to nurture in the young child. We ask that part of

your commitment to your child and their school experience is work to eliminate these activities from your child's life. We have observed that children who have little to no media more easily develop harmonious social habits and creative play. Please ask your child's teacher if you need support in finding alternative activities for your child.

Medication

If your child requires medication during their school day, please see the office staff to create a medication care plan for your child.

Parent Meetings

The early childhood classes will have parent meetings throughout the school year. Your child's teacher will announce the day and time for these gatherings. These meetings offer educational and social opportunities, along with the development of our understanding about the honorable path of childhood and parenting. Attending these meetings strengthens the relationship of the parents and teachers and in turn helps the integrity and growth of the children and whole class.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

These are an essential part of building a foundation with your child's teacher and working together to aid your child in their development.

In the autumn and spring of each school year, there are parent-teacher conferences held. We will discuss your child's physical and social life and skills, expression in the classroom, what we are working on and have open conversation. Your child's teacher will announce the available times when the conferences draw near. Though we will have opportunities to visit throughout the year, please feel free to schedule an additional meeting time with your teacher to have more in depth conversation.

Rain, Snow and Outdoor Gear

We go outside in all the weather Mother Nature brings us! To help us enjoy our time outside, we ask your child to have the following gear labeled and at their cubby:

- Boots, waterproof and insulated (we recommend the brand Bogs)
- Jacket (seasonally appropriate)
- Mittens or gloves, warm and snug fitting (in addition please consider rain mittens, see recommended rain gear brands below)
- Rain gear, full set, including jacket with hood, pants or bib overalls (we recommend Abeko, Grunden or Oakiwear brands)
- Shoes, for fair, dry weather (see below for more details)
- Snow clothes (for those exciting, rare snowy days)
- Sun hat, full brim (no baseball hats please)
- Stocking hat or balaclava
- Warm layers (such as a vest, a fleece, a sweater or sweatshirt)

Shoes

Outdoor: In fair, dry weather, children may wear sturdy play shoes. They must be comfortable, closed-toe shoes with a good sole that are easy to take on and off. They should be comfortable to run, jump, skip and play in.

Indoor: Children will also need sturdy play shoes or slippers (with sturdy soles and

backs) for indoor play. They, too, must be comfortable for all the many movements that our classroom and play time offers. They will be kept at the cubbies and used exclusively for our indoor classroom time.

Toilet Training

Children should be potty trained and able or working towards cleaning themselves when they enter school. It is common for some children to regress upon entering school. Please communicate with your child's teacher about your child's needs.

Toys

We ask that toys from home stay at home. They can be shared at play dates and when the teacher comes for home visits. Wonders and treasures of nature may come to be shared with the teachers and classmates. Some children benefit from a reminder to check their pockets for toys that may have jumped in for a ride to school!

Transitioning to School

As the exciting first day of school draws near, it will be helpful for your family to begin to gently and simply speak about the upcoming transition and make preparations. Here are some suggestions:

- One way to express and prepare for the transition would be to create a story about your child or a story character preparing for school and how they will get ready for school and what they will experience there.
- Doing tasks with your child at this age is very nourishing for them and makes a deep impression. For them to see their parents prepare with joy will help them anticipate and participate in the upcoming adventure. There are things to "do" with your child to prepare for the upcoming school year. It is not too early to begin to gather clothing items your child will need or have a special outing for school shoes. Keeping it simple, but fun!
- If your family is on a later schedule, it is a good time to begin to make bedtime a little early each night. Consider just 5-10 minutes earlier each night until you have reached the desirable bedtime for a well-rested and "early riser" child.
- Bringing new habits for preparation and organization can be helpful. In the evening, clothes can be chosen for the next day and laid on a "get ready chair". In the morning, children can practice dressing themselves with the clothes laid out on the "get ready chair". They can brush their hair and teeth every morning. These are a few helpful practices that can begin to bring regular sequence of events that will help make the school morning transition more pleasant. The more we develop a habit and "doing" of tasks, then ease can come and struggle can be a rarer visitor.
- A good, healthy breakfast helps create a solid start to the day. It also brings the much needed energy and strength to meet the many activities of the school day.

Visiting

If you would like to visit your child's classroom, please schedule a visiting time with your child's teacher. Also, as we have a Waldorf teacher training program on campus, we are often asked to host a teacher in training so that they may participate or observe

the classroom. Your child's teacher will keep the class parents informed of visitors.

Waldorf Parent Resources

Books:

All Year Round by Druitt, Clinton and Large

Beyond the Rainbow Bridge by Barbara Patterson

Heaven on Earth: A Handbook for Parents of Young Children by Sharifa Oppenheimer

Understanding Waldorf Education: Teaching from the Inside Out by Jack Petrash

Simplicity Parenting by Kim John Payne

The Blessing of a Skinned Knee: Using Jewish Teachings to Raise Self-Reliant Children
by Mogel

The Incarnating Child by Joan Salter

The Soul of Discipline by Kim John Payne

Waldorf Education: A Family Guide by Pamela Johnson Fenner

Waldorf Parenting Handbook by Cusick

Well, I Wonder: Childhood in the Modern World by Sally Schweizer

Work and Play in Early Childhood by Freya Jaffke

You are Your Child's First Teacher by Rahima Baldwin

Websites:

www.waldorfearlychildhood.org

www.allianceforchildhood.org

www.simplicityparenting.com

www.whywaldorfworks.org

www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org

