



ACORN WALDORF SCHOOL *for little oaks*

Receive the children with reverence

Educate them with love

Let them go forth with freedom

- Rudolf Steiner

Acorn Waldorf School Parent Handbook

Dearest Parents,

A warm welcome to you from Acorn Waldorf School! I am so happy that you have chosen Acorn, and we look forward to working in partnership with you to make this time rich and rewarding for both you and your child. I hope that this handbook will help to create a harmonious transition between home and school in the weeks and years to come. The purpose of this Handbook is to present you with comprehensive information about the school and Waldorf education and to offer guidelines for navigating within the AWS community. Thank you for taking the time to read this handbook and to keep it in a convenient place for future reference.

Motria Shuhan, Founder and Director

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Arrival and Departure Times

Arrival

8:30AM, Monday through Friday

Pick-up

12 (nursery half day) /12:30PM(kinder half day) or 3:00PM (full day), Monday through Friday

AWS Mission Statement

At the Acorn Waldorf School, our nature-based programming cultivates intelligent play, allowing the children to engage with the physical world and each other. This is the true work of childhood: the essential basis for critical thinking, problem solving and social interaction. In our warm, home-like classrooms and our forested wild spaces, the children are guarded from sensory overload (so ubiquitous in our culture) that can disrupt and even arrest this fundamental activity from finding expression. As an evolving institution, we are inspired by movements and philosophies, which call for social justice, nonviolence and diversity awareness in education. Our journey through the year honors the seasons through festivals, stories, songs, gardening and handwork. Experiential tasks, great and small, build the foundation for cognitive learning. All these elements work together, creating not only a superior foundation for elementary school learning but also a grounding in artistic capacity, ethical values, social awareness, resilience and health.

Waldorf Early Childhood Education

"The various activities of later life are carried out by the child in their play, which they conduct in full earnestness. Out of intellectual efforts by adults, all sorts of occupations and toys have been conceived for children, but children merely want to re-enact the actual work of adults. At kindergarten age the child really has the urge to imitate what the grown-ups are doing. It is therefore the task of kindergartens to introduce the activities in life in such forms that they can enter into the play of the child. . . What one brings to the education of children should be taken from life itself."

- *Rudolf Steiner, 1923*

The Waldorf approach to education emphasizes protecting the realm of early childhood in all its wonder and magic. Understanding that young children live in the world thoroughly and deeply through their senses, classroom environments are beautiful and abundant in natural healthful materials, such as wood, stones, shells, cotton, silk and wool. The simplicity of the toys invites young children to engage in their actively growing faculties of imagination. From imaginative play, a foundation of artistic and creative abilities is established that later promotes clear thinking.

Children grow through creative and open-ended play. They try on every imaginable situation. In the course of play, the children grow in all areas: physically, emotionally, socially, cognitively and spiritually. In artistic activities, the use of high quality materials is very satisfying for the children and indicates respect for their creative selves. Music is celebrated with joyful singing, in groups and individually throughout the day. A wealth of beautiful language experiences come in the form of circle time, verses, poems and songs. The telling of traditional stories, developed by wise humans over the centuries, nourishes the spirit and the moral development, and offers glimpses into various cultures around the world.

Recognizing the importance of each child becoming a loving member of the human family, Waldorf education actively seeks to encourage the qualities of compassion and moral courage. The teacher guides the children in social skills such as problem solving, negotiation, inclusiveness in work and play, and acceptance of individual differences as well as pleasant conversation and manners at the table. Waldorf educators support and encourage community building within the school and amongst families.

The natural world is an everyday part of Waldorf curriculum. Children and teachers reverently and enthusiastically engage in outdoor explorations. Children are encouraged to spend time in the garden, to dig in the earth, explore fields and woods, nature crafts, pressing of cider in the fall and maple sugaring in the spring, making bread from wheat to grain to flour to table, are all important activities within the Waldorf model. The changing seasons are celebrated with festivals that include the whole family and the wider community, as well.

In Waldorf education, each day has its rhythm of active outgoing and energetic activities balanced by more quiet and inward times. Daily, weekly and yearly rhythms are internalized by the children and give them strength and security.

Waldorf education is based on the work of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), an Austrian-born philosopher, artist, scientist and teacher. Steiner offered penetrating insights into a broad spectrum of human endeavors. Steiner called his work Anthroposophy or Spiritual Science. He emphasized that faculties lie dormant in the human soul, which, if properly nurtured, can lead to self-knowledge and understanding of the world. He described a path of self-development that involves clear thinking, acute observation, refinement of feeling, and transformation of the will. Author of dozens of books, Steiner also gave approximately 6,000 lectures on a wide range of subjects. In addition, he inspired biodynamic farming, approaches to the care and education of differently abled children, eldercare, anthroposophic medicine, and a movement art called “eurythmy,” among other initiatives.

Rhythm of the Day

Each day is planned with the children in mind. If you will be delayed, or your child will be absent, please call your child’s teacher as soon as possible.

HERE IS A SAMPLE RHYTHM: The teacher greets each child individually as they arrive. Parents establish a consistent and short goodbye ritual. Meal preparation and free play begins our day. There may also be a seasonal craft in various stages of completion. Between 9:20 - 9:40 a.m. we have our snack time. Snack, prepared with the children is enjoyed family style. At 10:15 a.m. we will clean up our room and gather for circle time.

Following a short rest time teachers and children will enjoy an extended outside playtime, which may include walks on trails, outdoor gardening, nature collection and investigation, and active play.

Inside Acorn Waldorf School

A child will gradually become accustomed to working within a group, listening to stories, interacting with a teacher and following a daily routine, while at the same time being aided in his or her development as an individual through the encouragement of creative play, practical life skills and artistic opportunities. The teacher deeply understands the young child and the need for movement, as well as the child's devotion to learning about the world through imitating everything they experience.

Here are some of the core activities of the AWS program and the significance of each in relationship to lifelong learning:

Creative Play Time

The children have a long period of time where they are encouraged to imagine and play with a wide variety of natural materials and playthings, following their own initiative. During this time, the teacher is involved in preparing the snack, sewing, cleaning, making toys or any of a number of practical activities with which the children are welcome to participate. An atmosphere of work and play permeates the room. Being able to follow a train of thought or carry a task to completion is very important for later academic life, such as solving complicated math problems or writing a report. This is a skill children will need throughout their lives.

Within the activities of play, children integrate the world and practice their life skills such as movement and balance, sensory integration, speech and language capacity, social and emotional interactions, and imaginative and cognitive development.

Circle Time

The class is brought together to sing songs and recite verses with the teacher. These may be connected with the seasons, a particular fairy tale or story, or just part of the general lore of childhood. Circle time also includes developmental movement activities with the songs and verses.

Repeating and remembering verses sets the stage for the more intense memory work that will be required in elementary school. Repetition is also recently lauded as a foundation for healthy brain development. Rhyming sounds and alliteration found in poems and songs educate the ear, forming the beginnings of spelling and phonics. Directed movement is a basis for healthy brain development.

Artistic and Craft Activity

Wet-on-wet watercolor painting, beeswax modeling, crayon drawing, as well as various forms of handwork such as finger knitting, simple sewing and woodworking are done as group activities or at the individual initiative of a child. High quality, organic materials are used for these activities.

These activities encourage the child's natural sense of beauty, color, and form, as well as laying the groundwork for artistic techniques that will be needed later. They also aid in the development of fine motor skills.

Music

Singing is woven throughout the day and is often used for transitioning from one activity to another. Sometimes simple instruments, such as chimes and kinder-harps, are also available for the children's use. Simple singing games provide songs and rhymes for parents and children alike to enjoy. The children learn to mark the seasons, develop their sense of rhythm, and enhance their memory skills through the singing of specifically chosen songs. Music lays the foundation for future math and engineering skills as well as a soothing influence throughout life.

Outdoor Play

Similar to the indoor creative playtime, the group is taken outdoors to experience the natural world in all its different seasons. You will find our Kindergarten class outside in all but the most formidable weather. A child who has had an experience of the seasons of the year can enter very deeply and comfortably into later studies of plants and animals, the weather, geology, astronomy and other natural sciences. Extensive outdoor experiences also hone the child's observation skills.

Snack Time

This is another group activity where the children eat together family style with their teachers. It is likely that they have also helped to prepare the food and set the table. Afterwards, they clear the table and wash their dishes. An emphasis on gratitude for the food and on table manners sets the stage for a lifelong social skill. Wholesome and organic snacks are prepared by the teachers with the participation of children. Some of the groceries for snacks are provided by the parents on a weekly rotation; you will be notified of when your family has their turn.

Story Time

During the course of the day, the children are gathered together to hear the teacher tell a special story. The ability to sit and listen to an adult for a sustained period of time is a skill that is gradually developed. The oral tradition of language arts development in the Waldorf school and the content of the stories expose the children to the beauty of language and literacy.

Seasonal Festivals

Seasonal festivals are celebrated, establishing a connection to the natural rhythms that sustain us. The celebration of a festival is the culmination of some weeks of preparation and anticipation. As this picture slowly fades, preparations for the next festival slowly begin. Celebrating together lays the groundwork for cultural and social diversity. The rhythmic experiences help parents as they seek to find their own balance with their children in home life.

Life Arts

Part of the daily experience is tending to the domestic life (cleaning, cooking, repairing) and self care (toileting, hair brushing, hand washing). It is a process-oriented approach. For example, the children may grind the flour that they will later mix into their flour for breadmaking. Involving the children in the

practical activities and care of their materials, their environment, and themselves lays the groundwork for organizational skills needed in adult life.

Acorn Waldorf School's Community Agreements

Introduction

"Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world." - bell hooks

In each interaction, the human being before us carries a rich tapestry of identities, weaving together a selfhood with a unique sense of gender, ethnic and racial background, spiritual beliefs, native language and immigration history. While we all have our own ideas of what these identities are, stemming from our own backgrounds, it is the individual before us and that person's sense of identity that truly informs who they are. When adults feel that all parts of themselves belong in the school's community, their children also feel this wholeness, crucial to their healthy development.

Agreements for Social Interaction

- **Shared language:** We are committed to language that respects and acknowledges all members of our community. We will listen and adjust if someone has feedback to share, regarding the use of ableist, sexist, homophobic, racist, classist or othering language.
- **Challenge the idea or belief, not the person:** Ideas are not people; we engage in critical discourse about ideas, not people.
- **Call "in" not "out":** If someone says or does something that we find problematic or offensive, we gently tell them. We try our best not to assume intention or meaning and ask for clarity. We can also share our perspective and how we feel.
- **We are all in process:** Interactions and conversations can shed light on one another's growing edges, and we accept this as an opportunity.

Agreements for Meetings

When people are gathered for the purpose of an agenda, communication is held to a higher standard for fostering the kind of collective thinking that can lead towards the focused aim. The following agreements help make our meetings inspired and productive:

- We ask questions rather than assuming, especially when the intentions of the other are unclear to us.
- We self-monitor our air time and truly listen to what others are saying so we may build on ideas. We avoid simply rehearsing what we will say next.
- We stand in our own experience, and can speak only from the “I” perspective, even as we bring in overarching ideas and principles.
- We respect confidentiality of information imparted to us and honor the need of others to do the same. What’s said here stays here; what’s learned here leaves here.
- Meeting facilitators are clearly identified and foster decisions that are best for the organization/whole group, rather than personal preferences. The facilitator is primarily responsible for monitoring the tone of the meeting and ensuring that these shared agreements are adhered to. However, anyone present may bring awareness to when this is not the case.

Procedure for Healing

An effective set of agreements requires a process for addressing times when someone in our community feels harmed. While harm might be subtle, or difficult to articulate, it can result in separation between people. This offers us the opportunity to work towards healing; relationships that are tested by times of rupture can grow stronger when repaired. Asking a clarifying question is often all that is needed to resolve an issue. Parties will attempt to resolve issues and concerns face to face whenever possible with the aim of healing and strengthening.

Acorn Waldorf School Social Inclusion Policy

Purpose of the policy

Diversity of all types benefits everyone in a community and is especially essential to a healthy educational community. Personal and institutional racism and bias have historically existed and continue to exist. Combating racism and bias in our schools is a moral and legal imperative. This policy aims to address and correct biased behavior, and restore the values in our school and classrooms that support a safe environment for all children and individuals by fostering an antiracist and anti-biased school community.

Goals

We are committed to the following goals:

1. Establish and sustain a school culture that shares in the collective responsibility to address, prevent and eliminate actions, decisions and outcomes that result from and perpetuate racism and bias.
2. Cultivate unique gifts, talents and interests of every child in our community to end the predictive value of social or cultural factors, such as race, class or gender, on student success.
3. Respect and value the diversity and life experiences of each community member to support the school's vision and mission.
4. Offer antiracist and anti-biased study opportunities, pedagogy and curriculum.
5. Faculty and administration at AWS engage in practices, which honor and reflect the unique backgrounds, experiences and identities of AWS families.
6. Through DEIJ educational opportunities, which raise awareness around our interdependence for our individual sense of well being and safety, all members of the community will be provided opportunities to learn about their impact on others.
7. Understanding child development from a Waldorf perspective, teachers are guided, in all aspects of their work, by the four core goals of Anti-Bias Education*:

Identity: teachers will nurture each child's construction of knowledgeable, confident, individual personal social identities.

Diversity: teachers will promote each child's comfortable, empathetic interaction with people from diverse backgrounds.

Justice: Teachers will foster each child's capacity to critically identify bias and will nurture each child's empathy for the hurt bias causes.

Activism: Teachers will cultivate each child's ability and confidence to stand up for oneself and for others in the face of bias.

*see naeyc.org (National Association of Young Children), *Understanding Anti-Bias Education: Bringing the Four Core Goals to Every Facet of Your Curriculum*, Louise Derman-Sparks, Julie Olsen Edwards

Glossary of terms

Diversity

Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender--the groups that most often come to mind when the term "diversity" is used--but also age, national origin, religion, ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language and physical appearance. It also involves different ideas, perspectives and values. (Source: *UC Berkeley Center for Equity, Inclusion and Diversity*)

Inclusion

Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities and decision/policy making in a way that shares power. (Source: *Some Working Definitions*, Open Source Leadership Strategies)

Antiracism

Antiracism is defined as the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic and social life. Antiracism tends to be an individualized approach and set up in opposition to individual racist behaviors and impacts.

(Source: *Race Forward*)

Racism

Racism = race prejudice + social and institutional power. It is a system of advantage based on race, oppression and white supremacy. Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred or discrimination. Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.

(Source: *Dismantling Racism Works Web Workbook*)

Implicit Bias

A set of automatic and uncontrolled cognitive processes that affect our attitudes toward others. These biases are thought to be involuntary and not under the conscious control of the individual and can lead to either favorable or unfavorable characterization of others.

(Source: *Don't Look Away: Embracing Anti-Bias Classrooms*)

Equity

Everyone gets a fair and just opportunity to thrive, according to their needs.

(Source: *What is Health Equity? And What Difference Does a Definition Make?*)

Microaggressions

The constant and continuing reality of slights, insults, invalidations, and indignities visited upon marginalized groups.

(Source: *Don't Look Away*)

Policy communication

This policy shall be included in the parent and staff handbooks, and on the school website.

Leadership and administration

AWS leadership (director, administrator and lead teachers) shall conduct a community-wide assessment to identify practices and processes that contribute to the goals of this policy, as well as those that result

in inconsistencies with this policy. Strategies will be developed and implemented based on this assessment. An annual review will be conducted to ensure continued compliance.

Our exit interviews with staff and families will solicit relevant feedback that will be included in our policy review.

Training

All new faculty and staff will be trained in this policy as part of their AWS orientation.

All members of the AWS community will be offered educational opportunities in antiracism and cultural awareness.

Policy enforcement

By the age of four, children have a sense of racial identity and some of the privilege that is specifically associated with white identity. When biased or racially motivated aggressions occur, this policy will be implemented for children according to their stage of development, to strengthen relationships and healthy connections with one another. Aggressions may be felt as racist or biased by the targeted child, and/or the behavior may be sensed as such by observers.

Racist behavior among children

Whether or not the behavior was intentional, the following procedures will be initiated:

- In a developmentally appropriate manner, teachers will ensure the targeted child is safe. The teachers will address the observed behavior and/or gather information to correct biased and racist behavior immediately to stop aggression toward the targeted child.
- Teachers will notify the school director.
- School leadership will formulate a plan to support the targeted child, restore the healthy fabric of the classroom, and establish expectations for parents to likewise address the behavior.
- Parental partnership is essential for mending relationships between the children involved. Teachers will notify the parents of all children involved. Parents may be offered educational support or outside resources around antiracism or anti-bullying. The parents of the children involved may be encouraged to meet with one another to help restore unity and mend the connection between their children and each other.
- The teachers will include a written report in AWS's "Social Inclusion" file. This file will support the improvement of our DEI work and will be part of our community-wide assessment (see "Training" and "Leadership and Administration" sections).

Racist or biased behavior among adults

Racist or biased behavior among adults on school grounds or at school functions is subject to this policy's goals and definitions, but is addressed procedurally by the AWS "Community Agreements."

Food in the Classroom

Warm snacks and lunches are prepared and served family style each day with organically grown ingredients whenever possible. Snack is served but it is important that the children eat a hearty breakfast at home. If for some reason your child has not eaten before coming to school, please inform one of the teachers so that we can be attentive to his or her needs. If your child has dietary restrictions, please be in touch with your child's teacher to make arrangements.

Potty Learning

You will know better than anyone when your child is ready to potty learn. When this happens, please talk with us and we will walk through this school transition with you. It is important to remember that learning at home is a different experience than learning at school or in public settings. At home, you have the ability to give this "task" your full attention (as parents, it is common to take on this stage of development over a long weekend or school break, much like weaning or helping our children sleep through the night). The home environment also allows for free access to the bathroom and not having to wait a turn. In the school setting, sometimes a child must wait and therefore must be able to control the urge to "go." School also has many distractions; it can be difficult for a child to leave their activity. Don't get discouraged; it is common for us to see accidents at school when home may be "all dry." Together, we will work to support your potty training efforts.

Clothing:

Clothing for children who are in the process of potty training should be easy to pull up and down. Please avoid dressing them in clothing with tricky buttons, snaps, and zippers, and please discontinue the use of onesies. We encourage children to be able to do this process themselves and want to steer them in the direction of success, not frustration. Elastic waistbands (sweatpants or leggings) are ideal until they are physically capable of doing snaps and buttons. Please refrain from sending them in anything that requires us to remove the top to get to the bottom (overalls, onesies).

We are here to support you and your child during this process as best we can. If you have any questions or concerns, please be sure to talk to us about it. We will let you know of any changes we see with potty learning, whether it's progress or a setback, which often happens for various reasons.

The Festivals of the Year

The human spirit in each child finds its expression in seasonal festivals celebrated through story and artistic presentation in the classroom and in family festivals.

Families from a wide range of religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds belong within Acorn Waldorf School, and all of our differences are honored. If you are interested in celebrating special holidays within your child's classroom, you are welcome to talk with your child's teacher.

Children enjoy preparing for the festivals by making crafts, baking special treats, learning seasonal songs, and more. Nature stories and thematic tales help bring the deeper significance of each season to the children in a pictorial way.

Birthdays

On or shortly after a child's birthday, we invite the birthday child's family to join us in our celebration. The birthday story is presented as a picture of the child's own birth and growth. This can be a reassuring, satisfying story for the young child. In its simple pictorial beauty, it answers many of the child's questions and wonderings in a way that is suited to their imagination. Children with summer birthdays will be celebrated at the end of the school year as a group.

Clothing and Gear

Please dress your child in appropriate clothing for being outdoors in the weather, including in closed-toed shoes that have tread (flip-flops and Crocs are not appropriate footwear for the forest). Your child will get muddy and dirty while in school. Your child will need to bring rain gear when it is rainy or has been raining, and a hat and mittens when months grow cold. We are always available to help with gear questions. Please have your child's cubby stocked with two full changes of clothes at all times.

The following list of clothing is required:

- Bib rain pants
- Rain jacket with a hood
- Baseball cap or hat with good brim for under rain hood
- Long underwear bottoms and top (wool, wool/silk, or synthetic)
- Wool sweater or fleece top
- Snow pants
- Winter jacket
- Socks (wool or wool/silk blend)
- Rain boots and Bogs-style boots. No Velcro or lace closures

- Hat (wool or fleece) or a balaclava: please, no scarves
- Mittens (water proof shell plus wool mittens work well) - 2 pairs

What to Wear Early Fall/Late Spring: Check the weather forecast for the day and dress accordingly.

- We prefer long pants to protect from scrapes and bug bites.
- For cooler or wet days: Waterproof pants are useful over a lighter pair, as we are often in wet environments. We like layers on top that can be shed or added as needed. Merino wool under layers are soft, not scratchy and most kids accept them.
- Wool or silk blend socks are preferred over cotton.
- Rain boots for rainy days or days that begin with heavy morning dew.
- A waterproof rain jacket should be sent in the backpack, it makes a good windbreaker.
- Sun hat

What to Wear Winter/Early Spring:

- Full body snowsuit or combination bib-snow pants with a winter coat - On days when it is particularly wet or raining please send in rain pants and a rain jacket in addition to the snowsuit. We will often put the rain gear over snow gear to help keep the children dry.
- Snow boots - Please choose boots that can accommodate thick socks. We do not recommend boots with laces: pull-on boots or velcro is preferred.
- Thick wool socks or thick thermal socks.
- Winter hat or balaclava - please make sure the hat fully covers your child's ears.
- Neck gaiter
- Snow Mittens - Please do not send snow gloves. Mittens keep the children's hands much warmer and are easier to get on and off. Ideally, the mittens will have a long cuff to go under their coat and/or a zipper to help get them on. Mittens do tend to get wet and saturated during play, so sending in an extra pair is recommended.
- Base layers - Please have your child wearing base layers under their clothes every day. Base layers will ideally be made of wool or cotton, but synthetic will do as well. It is always good to have an extra pair to travel in your child's backpack or have in their cubby in case theirs get wet.
- Sweater/Extra Layers - Please have your child wear or pack a sweater and make sure they have extra clothes for layering in their bin.

LAYERING is the key, as your child will be very active outdoors and often sitting. Whatever a child is not wearing will be stored in their backpack. Long underwear (i.e.; poly-propylene or capilene, wool, or silk/wool blends) is essential as it wicks moisture off the body. Hats are required in cold weather. We suggest getting a pair of boots that is one size larger than your child's foot. This will create "dead-air space" to assist in insulating the foot. The best insulation for the feet is one or two pairs of wool socks with water-proof boots that have wiggle room.

Finding Good Gear:

Finding good gear takes some care, but it is critical to your child's enjoyment of nature. Make sure it really is waterproof by looking at the seams (they should be sealed). Look for hand-me-downs and review the links for gear on our website.

To ensure a positive experience for everyone involved, all children are required to wear the proper clothing. If you need help with some of the above items, please ask. We always have extras or can help you locate gear.

We also ask that children not wear garments with strong graphic designs, lots of writing, or media images. We have found that those can be distracting as well as over-stimulating.

Please label each item of clothing clearly and check the baskets in the cubby room for lost & found items.

Behavior Guide

At Acorn Waldorf School, we take many measures to prevent behavior problems. Our goal is to support the development of self-discipline within each child and to help him or her develop social skills. Our own professional and inner work brings understanding of childhood developmental issues and gives us realistic expectations for the children. We strive to model ideal behavior through our interactions between each other, as teachers, with the children, and with you as parents. The rhythm of our day goes a long way toward helping the children develop inner form and the impulse to care for others, their playthings, and their environment. The classroom environment also affects behavior, therefore utmost consideration is given to the physical space of the classroom.

We will always share any concerns, or specific incidents we have about your child with you as we hope you will share with us any events that may be stressful in the life of your family that would affect your child's behavior in school.

We will use behavior guidance that is fair, reasonable and suited to the age of the child. We will not use any corporal punishment. If a child persists in problem behavior (hitting, biting, breaking toys, etc.), we will ask you to come and pick up the child from school for the remainder of the day.

Approaches to discipline that are used at AWS are:

- Gesture - Without calling or speaking, we indicate with a gesture what we would like the child to do. Ex: sit down, quiet, etc.

- Royal "we" - Speak in "we" rather than individualizing the children. This helps them to learn to participate and takes the personal out of the equation. Ex: "Now we are sitting down," or, "We are putting on our shoes."
- Privileged "may" - When asking a child to do a task or deed, we speak with truthfulness. We don't phrase a request as a question if we do not truly want to receive a yes or no response. Ex: "You may close the door."
- Pictorial Language - Children live in pictures. When we make a request through the use of creative language, children often respond with delight and enjoyment. Ex: to encourage a child to help put all the "food" back in their play kitchen we might say: "Let's collect all the muffins in the basket," or, "Don't let the ice cream melt—let's put it in the freezer."
- Intentional use of tone of voice - To retain the child's respect, tone must suit the circumstance. Discipline is for the benefit of the child and must further a classroom environment of love and respect.
- We prefer to save "NO" for harm to self and others - We most often use the words "may" or "may not," so that the child can actively learn from our boundary setting. To redirect in a positive way, we describe what we *want* to see the child doing.
- If NO, then when YES? - As teachers we ask ourselves: what are the underlying needs of the child? Is there a more appropriate way for them to have that need met?
Ex: If the child is knocking another child's block castle over, we can create a place where things can be knocked over and broken down.
- Create healing relative to the deed - Ex: Have the child who hurt another help with the healing of the injured child by giving them an ice pack or offer to kiss the boo-boo.
- Objectify the deed - By seeing the inherent good in each child, we can then separate their behavior from who they are. This prevents the child from seeing him or herself as "bad." Ex: "I see those hands are knocking into things... let's help them do good work."
- Healing stories - Stories are told that provide examples and models of how to treat one another with kindness and gentleness. These moral lessons, told through stories, sink deeply into the child's consciousness and provide a way for them to check their behavior.

AWS encourages parent participation in the life of the school. Time, skills and creative ideas are welcomed! For the mixed-age kindergarten programs, parent “fly on the wall” visits are welcome and can be arranged with your child’s Class Teacher. These visits give parents a chance to observe the classroom and join in the day through handwork or a task the teacher will share at arrival.

Parent/Teacher Conversations

Parent/Teacher conversations are scheduled twice a year to provide an opportunity for parents and teachers to share their impressions and any concerns. Individual conferences can be arranged with teachers at any time if parents have a special concern about their child. Teachers appreciate being informed of significant changes or circumstances in your child’s life.

Parent Meetings

Your child’s teacher will hold meetings throughout the year as an important way for parents to meet one another and to discuss questions about their child’s education. Attendance is very important for building the healthy communication needed in support of the child in the classroom. Children are not permitted at these meetings and aftercare will be provided.

Communications

The following chart contains information on the best contact for different circumstances.

Classroom Relationships & Curricular	Class Teacher
Neighboring Community Relationships	Motria Shuhan (Founder/Director) - motria@acornws.org
Health and Safety, Financial	Carol Jordan (Administrator) - carol@acornws.org
Policies, School Information, Campus/Site	Amanda Odmark (Communications Director) - amanda@acornws.org

Parent Care Group (PCG): Administration, Parent Representatives from each class

MISSION: The PCG supports the social fabric of the parent body and builds a community that centers on a shared commitment to Waldorf parenting, DEIJ work, and love and respect for the natural world.

Hosts parent educational opportunities and offers resources for learning about Waldorf pedagogy and parenting, as well as facilitated DEIJ parent study, workshops and talks. Supports and creates social opportunities for school parents, which include school festivals and events that highlight community talents, backgrounds and interests. Social opportunities also include practical work on campus for site improvement and beautification. The PCG meets on a monthly basis at minimum, and meetings are open to all parents who are interested in the work of the group. **Class Teachers will ask 2-3 parents to be representatives in the PCG.**

Safety

- **Authorized caretakers:** To protect our school and children, parents are asked to submit a list to your child's teacher of all persons who are authorized to pick up your child from school other than other AWS parents. Please update this list as necessary. Anytime a child is to be picked up by someone whose name does not appear on this parent-approved list, parents must send a note giving special permission. The specially approved driver must then identify himself or herself to the teacher before taking the child. Under no circumstances will children be released to unauthorized adults. Please let your child's teacher know if another AWS parent will be picking them up.
- **Parental Responsibility:** Parents are responsible for their children until the teacher greets the child in the morning of a school day, and as soon as the teacher says good-bye to the child in the afternoon of a school day. Parents who accompany their children in the Roots and Shoots Parent-Child program are responsible for their children at all times. Playground supervision after dismissal times is not provided. The following AWS Safety Guidelines must still be observed on campus outside of school hours.
- **Traffic:** Children are to remain on grassy areas or paths behind the fence and not in the driveway. Adults are asked not to stand in the roadway.
- Adults are asked anytime you're on campus with your child outside of school hours, please return any items that you've moved during your play time. If they play in the sandbox, toys should be returned to the shed. Bicycles and tricycles should be returned to the firewood shed. Thank you for your help keeping our campus tidy for our community!
- **Pets:** No pets are permitted past the gates on campus. Thank you for your cooperation!

Health Policies

Please reach out to the School Administrator Carol with any questions regarding our healthy policy. carol@acornws.org

These policies are in place to keep our whole school community safe. Thank you for your attention and care!

Because at AWS we are concerned with the whole child and find a relationship between health and child development, you will find your child's teacher receptive to any comments you wish to share about your child's health, illnesses past and present, sleeping and eating habits, stresses, and home-life rhythms.

If a child receives a minor injury during school hours, they will be offered a band-aid or salve as needed. If a child requires more significant first aid, the parent will be contacted. If there is a head injury, parents will be contacted immediately.

Any child who is ill with an infectious or contagious condition must not be brought to school until the end of the infectious phase. If your child is ill and will not be attending that morning, please inform your child's teacher between 7 and 8:00 a.m. If there is a question about your child's state of health, it is better to keep your child at home.

Children who have the following symptoms or illnesses may not attend school:

- an illness that includes vomiting
- a virus
- a temperature over 100 degrees (child must be 24 hours fever free without the use of medication before returning to school)
- pink eye
- diarrhea
- a parasitic infection
- any communicable or contagious disease

We request that parents give their children at least one full day of rest at home after a fever.

Parents will be contacted if a child develops any symptoms that suggest illness such as:

- Unusual listlessness
- Excessively red or draining eyes
- Skin rash
- Severe cough
- Persistent nausea, with or without vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Persistent headache, stomachache, or sore throat
- Elevated temperature

Communicable Diseases - Children with the following communicable diseases need to stay home for the time periods stated below.

- *Impetigo*: There must be no draining lesions, and the child must have received 24 hours of treatment.
- *Head Lice*: The child must be free of all lice and eggs before returning; treatment alone is not sufficient for re-entry. The child's head will be checked before the child may return to class. All blankets, pillows, and articles of clothing that may have been exposed to lice should be taken home and washed thoroughly.
- *Scabies*: The child must stay home until at least 24 hours after treatment has begun.
- *Throat/Scarlet Fever*: The child is to have 24 hours of antibiotics or equivalent treatment before returning to school.
- *Ringworm/Pinworms*: The child needs to stay home until treatment has been started and is cleared to return to school by their doctor..
- *Conjunctivitis/Pink Eye*: The child is to have 24 hours of antibiotic eye drops and no further eye discharge before returning to school as this is an incredibly contagious illness.

2025-26 Covid Policy:

- If you have reason to test your child (i.e., they have symptoms following a significant exposure) and they test positive, they cannot return to school until there's one negative test.
 - Teachers who test positive can return after 5 days, masked, using their discretion if they're feeling well.
 - All of this is subject to review. We will notify you of any changes or updates.
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Immunizations

We are required by state law to keep a current record of your child's immunizations in our files, along with a medical form reflecting a physician well-visit within the previous 12 months. Each time your child is immunized, you must promptly provide an updated copy of your child's immunization record or notify the school so that we can update our record of your child's immunizations. We are required to update our records of your child's immunizations each year.

Privacy Policy

- We will do all that we can to protect your family's privacy and will abide by the state privacy laws. We will keep all records and information about your child and your family private and confidential, unless we have your written permission to share specific information.
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Mandated Reporting

AWS teachers and staff are state-mandated reporters and are required to report any suspected cases of physical or sexual abuse or neglect. If we have reason to believe that your child has been abused or neglected, we will report the situation to our licenser or to the local child protection office.

Records for Your Child

We will keep the following records for your child; you are responsible for updating these records immediately when any of this information changes:

- In the event of an emergency, your teachers will contact parents first and then to the emergency contact if parents are not available
- The phone numbers of the child's doctor and dentist, and consent to obtain emergency medical or dental care
- List of everyone who is authorized to drop off and pick up the child

- Medical form including current immunizations and record of physician well-visit within previous 12 months
 - Signed agreement regarding tuition payment arrangements
 - Any special care or health requirements for your child
 - Photo permission form
 - Field trip permission form
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Closures and Delays

- Assuming teachers have internet service, they will send email and Remind App notice (see below) to all parents regarding any closings or delays, usually by 7AM. On rare occasions, decisions may be made later in the morning, but always before 7:30AM. In the event of an early dismissal from school, teachers will send Remind App texts.
 - In coming to a decision regarding delays and cancellations, we will check the weather (hudsonvalleyweather.com) as well as the decisions of the other seven (or so) schools in our area, particularly the Rondout Valley School District (<http://pamal.com/stormcenter/whud.php>). In theory, district schools have the best information. However, we acknowledge that they sometimes make mysterious and incorrect decisions.
 - The Remind App allows teachers to easily text the whole parent group any closing/delay information. We have found this is helpful to parents who may not check their email in the morning before school time. We hope that this will prevent unnecessary trips to school in case of delays/closings.
 - In the event that the school year has more than 6 snow closings (delays are not included), families would be offered “give back days” (during Mid-Winter or Spring Breaks). This allows for some missed days to be made up, without extending the school year.
 - While every effort will be made to make a good decision, there will be times when it will turn out to be an unnecessary closing or delay. We ask for your trust and understanding. We make every effort to make a good decision.
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Tuition Billing Information

A detailed tuition payment policy is included in the enrollment and contract package and is available upon request. Tuition payments are due the 15th of each month, August-May. There is a late fee of \$15 for past-due payments. Acorn Waldorf School requires ninety (90) days written notice to terminate the contract.

Withdrawals and Late Entrances

Enrollment is made for the entire year, and school expenses are budgeted accordingly. Therefore, no reduction in tuition is made for absence due to illness or vacation. Tuition for children enrolling after the start of the school year will be prorated from the date of entrance.

After conversing with the teacher, parents must give notice in writing of their intention to withdraw their child. Refunds are not issued for withdrawals. Acorn Waldorf School requires ninety (90) days written notice to terminate the contract.

Rhythm and Home Life

A key element of Waldorf education is rhythm: the rhythms of the day, the week, and the year, including the seasons and festivals. Simple rituals help to mark the rhythm of the school day: the lighting of a candle at story time, a blessing at snack time, a good-bye circle or song. A rhythmic home life harmonizes with the school experience, strengthens the child, and makes life easier for the entire family. Regular times for meals, chores, play, homework, and bed help build a rhythm and lead to healthy child development.

Screen Time

Acorn Waldorf School is dedicated to nurturing the children's capacities for imagination, healthy feeling, independent thinking, and active willing. It is our experience that these capacities develop best through warm human interaction and the children's enthusiastic immersion in the natural world, with all of their senses fully engaged.

Because of this, we encourage mindfulness around screen usage. Like with anything else we see impacting your child's healthy development and engagement and flow in their play, your teacher will be in contact with you about their observations.

When children are actively and imaginatively engaged with the natural world, they experience the joy of their own energy. Their energy soon becomes will power, self-discipline and ultimately, self-direction. With a will, they apply themselves to all artistic endeavors - the painting that nourishes it, or the drawing that enlivens it. Children's thinking also becomes mobile and imaginative: their capacity for living vividly into the stories they hear becomes the capacity of empathy for their fellow humans in adulthood. As adults, too, they become independent, creative individuals, feeling at home in the world.

Library

AWS has a number of books about education, parenting, family life and child development in our Lending Library by the bulletin board. Parents and friends are encouraged to borrow books. Please sign them out, don't forget to return them for other families to read!

Reading List

Below are suggested titles for adult reading about Waldorf education:

- Beyond the Rainbow Bridge - Barbara Patterson
- You Are Your Child's First Teacher — Rahima Baldwin Dancy
Nokken
- A Danish Approach to Waldorf-based Child Care - Helle Heckman
- The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon — D. Elkind
- Waldorf Education: A Family Guide — P. Johnson Fennert and K. Rivers
- Simplicity Parenting – Kim John Payne