

# *Yuba River Charter School*

## *Kindergarten Handbook*

*Revised June 2011*



*"Receive the child in reverence,  
Educate the child in love,  
Let the child go forth in freedom."  
Rudolf Steiner*

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## **WELCOME**

Dear Parents,

Each year there is an air of excitement surrounding the Kindergarten. The doors of that wonderful kingdom are soon to open; the little children have waited a long while and now it is time to begin.

Then the day comes. Both parents and children arrive equally excited. Parents depart with one last good-bye kiss, entrusting their dear little ones to our care. The child's day begins full of creative play, perhaps painting or baking, circle time, lots of singing and stories. When parents arrive to collect their children, eagerly questioning the day's events, they are most often answered by dreamy gazes and "nothing" seems to be the statement most given to the question, "What did you do today in the Kindergarten?"

Because of the child's ability to live in the present moment, he/she is unable to recount the day's events intellectually. We soon learn to interpret their way of retelling the day's events. Perhaps we hear a little fragment of a song or a line of a verse, or the name of a new friend.

And now comes the question: How can we create a bridge between the Kindergarten and home - to bring together a harmonious meeting of the two? With this in mind we give to you this booklet, with the hope that it sheds some light on the Waldorf-inspired Kindergarten and how we look at our work with the children.

We want you to feel that we are always open to your questions or concerns, and that through the school we may grow as parents, teachers, and children together in a true community.

The Kindergarten Faculty

### **Philosophy**

Infants and young children are entirely given over to their physical surroundings; they absorb the world primarily through their senses and respond in the most active mode of knowing: imitation. Imitation is the power to identify oneself with one's immediate environment through one's active will.

Anger, love, joy, hate, intelligence, stupidity - speak to the infant through tone of voice, physical touch, bodily gesture, light, darkness, color, harmony, and disharmony. These influences are absorbed by the still forming physical organism and affect it for a lifetime.

As teachers, we feel the responsibility to create an environment that is worthy of the child's unquestioning imitation. We want to offer the child plenty of opportunities for meaningful imitation and for creative play. This supports the child in the central activity of the early years: the development of the physical organism. We understand that to draw the child's energies away from this fundamental task to meet premature intellectual demands, robs the child of the health and vitality he or she will need for later life and weakens the very powers of judgment and practical intelligence the teacher wants to encourage.

In our kindergartens children dress up and become mothers and fathers, kings and gnomes; they sing, paint, and color. Through songs and poems they learn to enjoy language; they learn to play together; hear stories, which they reenact in drama, see puppet shows, bake bread, make soup, model beeswax, build houses out of boxes, sheets and boards. It is our belief that to become fully engaged in such work is the child's best preparation for life. It builds powers of concentration, interest, and a life-long love of learning.

Our teaching is oral, dramatic, and creative. It challenges the children to develop gradually their awakening capacities to think clearly, to feel fully, and to act freely.

### **Daily Schedule 8:30 am – 1:00 pm**

Drop Off	8:15-8:25
Class Starts	8:30
Class Ends	1:00
Pickup	1:00-1:10
Child sent to office for pickup (charge for after-care program)	1:10

### **Preparing for the First Day**

Three nights before school begins, tell your child a simple story at bedtime. The story could be created about a little animal in the forest

and how she/he is getting ready to go to school. Make the story appropriate to your child; for example, choose the animal your child is most like. Is she/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, etc. Integrate your own personal life into the story - i.e. 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 safe 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. Please tell this story each night for three nights as preparation.

### **Morning Arrival**

Morning time is when we are our most sensitive. Being not long out of sleep and dreamland makes us very open to influences around us. Little children especially need to wake slowly and gently. We recommend a calm morning without rushing. We request that your child's morning be free from television and radio or tapes played in the car on the way to school. We wish to begin our morning together in an atmosphere of peace. Please bring your child quietly into the Kindergarten and discourage loud behavior and running.

We prefer that you save any questions for us until after school. You may leave a note for your teacher with information, which you deem necessary for your child's well being during the morning, or you may call us before or after school. If your child has had a hard morning, didn't eat his/her breakfast, or some family crisis has occurred, please give us a note and tell us to read It A.S.A.P. It is very Important for us to be kept updated on events that may have an Impact on your child. Our numbers are listed in the school directory.

The Kindergarten teachers will be ready to receive your children at 8:00 AM. Teachers are not responsible for, or ready to receive the children prior to that time. If you happen to arrive early, please wait with your little one until their teacher is ready to receive them. Please do not leave your child alone in the playground or hallways.

Starting time is 8:15 AM. For your child's sake and that of the class, please be on time. Rhythm strengthens the will and supports your child and the whole class. Role is taken first thing in the morning therefore if you should arrive late for school, please check in at the office for a tardy slip so your child will not be marked absent and then

accompany your child to class. NEVER leave your child at the gate to come in alone if you are late for school. We may have gone to an assembly or on a walk and the child will find him/herself quite alone.

If you should arrive late, after going to the office for a tardy slip, help your child join the class with minimal disruption.

## **Dismissal**

The kindergarten morning ends at 12:45. Please pick up your child promptly, as they are ready to see Mom or Dad when their day is done. It gives your child a wonderful secure feeling when you are on time at the end of the school day. If your child has not been picked up 10 minutes after dismissal he/she will be taken to the school office where someone will try to reach you by telephone. If we are unable to contact a parent or caregiver, the child will be taken to the aftercare program and the family will be charged accordingly.

Information regarding aftercare is available in the office. See Kidspace Handbook for more information. It is available on our school website at [www.yubariverschool.org](http://www.yubariverschool.org).

## **Rhythms**

Children are carried along by the rhythms of the world they live in, from the rhythms of breathing in their bodies to the daily rhythms of sleeping and waking. The yearly cycle of the seasons is part of life's experience for all of us. Our view is that children flourish when their daily activities reflect the natural order of life with a rhythmic arrangement of the day. Thus the kindergarten activities flow with a sense of "breathing in and out" from the quiet moments of fairy tale and circle to the active moments of rigorous work and play.

Typically the day begins with morning circle, followed by artistic work, creative play, cleanup, snack, outside play, inside for story and good by. Transitions between activities are graced with a song as the teacher creates a rhythm of quiet and active experience for the child.

Each day has its own special activity and its own food; for example: Monday, painting /rice; Tuesday, beeswax/oats; Wednesday, coloring/millet; Thursday, bread making/cinnamon rolls; Friday, chopping vegetables/vegetable barley soup.

In keeping with the picture of a wholesome atmosphere, environment, and activities for the children, we take pains to make sure that the snacks we provide are of the highest quality. Where possible organic foods are used. Each child's special needs are also considered. Therefore, if your child has allergies, please speak to his/her teacher.

Children are carried along by the regular rhythms of the school day, and they are nourished by the regular rhythms at home as well. As difficult as it is in these modern times to establish set mealtimes and bedtimes, we strongly encourage you to do so. It is health giving for young children to go to bed at the same time every night and we recommend that they be asleep no later than 8:00 PM. We would be happy to share some ideas for making this transition a happy one for parent and child.

### **Television & other Electronic Media**

The foundational work of the Waldorf Kindergarten is to offer a curriculum that allows the child's inner genius to unfold. We offer opportunities to exercise imitation and imagination, the young child's natural way of learning. These activities build the capacity for creative thinking. Because the physical body as well as the ability to form their own inner pictures is disturbed by exposure to electronic media, these children struggle to meet the demands of such a curriculum even through the grades.

The presence of television, movies, videos, computer use, and video games in a child's life is often clearly seen in the Kindergarten. The stimulating influence it has upon little children is visible in many ways. The child may speak in the tone of a certain character or machine where speech can be reduced to the sound of robots or mechanical noises. The child may seem "stuck" in creative play, unable to play anything but a super hero, transformer, or "emergency". Other children seem to lose their imagination and can't "think" of anything to play (not even house). Subtle changes may be noted in a child who cannot sit still during a story making it a distressing time instead of a time of wonderment and delight.

Other effects of electronic media on children are uneasiness, lack of attention span or perseverance. Perhaps the greatest loss is the dimming effect it has on the child's wonderful imagination. It is this imagination that provides the foundation for learning and growth. We agree with educators who suggest that to enhance learning children

should stay media free at least until they are literate, and wish that for the children in our Kindergarten classes.

It is our hope that you will strive to find alternatives that will create memories for your child which are more precious than what the media has to offer. The Kindergarten teachers would be happy to share ideas for your family as well.

## **Visiting**

Some parents have a regular morning on which they are the parent helper. This is much needed and valued assistance. Please alert the teacher when you are not able to attend so a substitute can be arranged if necessary. If you accept an assignment as a regular morning helper we ask that your attention be focused on the children.

Some parents cannot attend regularly but are interested in substituting occasionally. Others simply want to visit from time to time. Parents are always welcome, but we would appreciate advance notice of when you would like to visit. In this way we can coordinate visitors so that the kindergarten does not become overcrowded with adults.

We welcome your support in the kindergarten whether you are a parent volunteer or visiting the classroom. We would like to offer a few guidelines for your visit to insure the optimum environment is created for the children. In the kindergarten we try to limit our adult conversation to that which supports the rhythm of the day. 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 and to create a space for them to fully live into their Imaginations.

We strive to create an environment where the child can freely create through art and play. Respecting this space, we do not question the children about, or attempt to enter into their art or their play. Instead, we stay in a place of warm observation, keeping our grown up judgments to ourselves. For the young child, the artistic *process* is more highly valued than the product.

Our words very often become too much for the children. As our mothers always told us: "Actions speak louder than words." This is especially true for the young child who lives in his will in imitation. We

find that they most often want to do what the grownups are doing. Therefore, if it is time to come to circle or the snack table, it is very helpful if the adults come into the activity and sit down to wait, as we want the children to do. Most often, the children will follow.

It is essential for the good care of your child that the parents and teachers communicate. We always want to know your concerns, and are grateful for your questions and suggestions. For their protection, these conversations are best held beyond the earshot of the children. Please feel free to talk with us by phone or to arrange a meeting, and we will do the same. The teachers and classroom helpers will meet regularly to provide the opportunity for the special communication needed to facilitate the classroom work.

## **Festivals**

In the kindergarten we mark the rhythms of the year through the changing seasons and the coming and going of festivals. As the year weaves from one festival to another we are provided with a true reason for preparation and celebration. For the young child the preparation is half the joy. They love decorating the room, baking special treats, and learning songs and verses chosen just for that particular festival. Stories that are told give the children a pictorial understanding of the festival and speak very deeply to them without our need to explain anything.

Festivals celebrated in the kindergarten are Harvest, Fall Equinox gardening day, Halloween, Lantern walk, Thanksgiving, Winter Solstice, Valentines Day, Spring Equinox gardening day, and May Faire.

Each room has a nature table which changes with the seasons bringing into the room a way for the children to note these changes. Children love this table. We suggest that you let your child have a small table or windowsill to create his or her own nature or seasonal table at home.

## **Birthday Celebrations**

The teachers regard your child's presence in the kindergarten as a blessing and are grateful for the opportunity to express our appreciation on his or her birthday. Each teacher has a slightly different way of honoring your child at this time. Most often, a birthday story is told which through the imagination describes an

understandable picture of the human birth experience. This is followed by singing, birthday snack, and a special gift given by the teacher to the child. The unique birthday ceremony given by each teacher can be a memorable occasion for your child, and parents are an important part of this ceremony. Grandparents, and siblings are also warmly welcomed to participate. As your child's birthday draws near, your teacher will contact you to discuss details.

If your child's birthday does not fall within the school year, his or her 1/2 birthday may be celebrated, or a group birthday for the summer children may be held.

## **Clothing**

The Kindergartens are places of active work and play. For your child's comfort and enjoyment of the morning we recommend the following:

### **YES:**

Sturdy clothes for active play

Natural fibers for comfort and breath ability

Sturdy shoes with laces

Slippers or shoes for wear inside the classroom (please have these be snug and practical, no stuffed animal slippers, or slippers with no backs).

Socks

Hat with sun visor

Warm winter hat your child will wear

Jacket, Coat, or Sweater

Boots, Rain Coat, Rain Hat - we will go out on rainy days

Layers for comfort inside and outside

***Please label all clothing, hats, sweatshirts, etc.***

### **Please, NO:\***

Sleeveless clothing

Sandals

Cowboy boots

Jellies

Slip-on party shoes

Shoes with lights

Media characters or messages on any clothing or accessories

*\*Also see School Dress Code in your Parent Handbook*

The teachers will maintain a supply of extra clothing for the children to borrow as the need arises. Some parents send their children with a backpack each day, which contains extra clothing.

Through our work we have noted how commercial television and or movie images printed on clothing and personal belongings affect the imaginative play of little children. Because we try to provide as beautiful and as tranquil an environment as possible, we ask you to refrain from sending your child to school with these. We would prefer lunches to arrive from home in baskets or cloth or paper sacks.

Please check the lost and found periodically for lost clothes. Seasonally articles left in the lost and found are donated to charity. The newsletter will give warning that a donation is about to happen. Your best protection against loss is to **label your child's clothing and personal articles.**

### **Personal Belongings**

Please send nothing from home in the way of toys, books, jewelry, stickers, make-up, or items that like to hide in pockets. These personal items are grieved if lost, are given and wanted back again, and detract from our kindergarten morning.

### **Sharing**

It is our goal that we will share about families, friends, and ourselves. If your child wants to bring something to share with the class, it should be a treasure from nature, or something that is handmade. Your child's teacher will fill you in as to if there is a special day for sharing.

### **Kindergarten Parent Evenings**

Throughout the school year your child's teacher will schedule parent evenings. These are essential for understanding and supporting the work of the teacher with the child, as well as supporting the home life. There is both a social and pedagogical aspect to the parent evenings, which brings a wonderful opportunity for community building. Your presence is strongly urged.

## **Parent Teacher Conferences**

Parent–teacher conferences are held twice a year, once in the fall and in the spring. These are important for deepening the teachers understanding of the child. Conferences provide an opportunity to share observations about your child. The teachers 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 with his/her teacher. Please make an appointment any time it is needed.

## **Home Visits**

A home visit can help to build a bridge between home and school. The children love to introduce teacher to their pets, show their room and yard and share a cup of tea.

## **First Grade Readiness**

There are many factors that help us to decide if a child is ready for the first grade. Children born in March or April will be evaluated in the spring as to whether they should move on to first grade, or grow for another year in the kindergarten. We want the children to be at least 6 1/2 to enter the first grade. You and your child’s teacher will work together to determine the best placement for your child.

## **Recommended Reading**

You are Your Child’s First Teacher: Rahima Baldwin  
Festivals, Families and Food: Casey and Large  
Waldorf Education, A Family Guide: Fenner & Rivers  
The Magical Child: Joseph Chilton Pearce  
Evolution’s End: Joseph Chilton Pearce  
Lifeways: Gudrun & Bon Voors  
Endangered Minds: Dr. Jane Healy

## APPENDIX

### KINDERGARTEN DISCIPLINE

(Approved by the Charter Council 8-11-10)

#### **General Guidelines**

At Yuba River Charter School one of the central aims is that the school environment fosters children's safety and well-being. Faculty, administration and parents work together collaboratively towards this end. Respect for adults, peers and property must be sought at all times in all areas of participation.

#### **In The Classroom**

Individual disciplinary problems, whether in the classroom or on the play yard, are handled directly by the supervising teacher or authorized adult. When a discipline issue presents itself, the teacher will seek age appropriate interventions that re-direct the behavior which may include:

- logical consequences
- a rest and recovery time
- create an opportunity for restitution.

The teacher strives to meet the individual needs of each child. Hence students may have different consequences for similar behavior. Parent participation towards appropriate behavior in the classroom may be considered.

We oppose all forms of corporeal punishment, public ridicule or any other form of psychological, emotional, or physical abuse.

#### **Discipline Process**

The following behaviors are above and beyond what the class teacher is expected to handle in the classroom. This is not an exclusive list of what constitutes an **incident**:

- Biting
- Excessive pushing
- Pushing to the ground
- Kicking
- Hitting with malicious intent
- Use of objects as a weapon
- Verbal abuse
-

- Harassment - Targeting a specific student (bullying or excessive teasing)

**NOTE: Parent helpers that observe any behaviors that constitute an incident need to report it immediately to the teacher.**

The following outlines the process when an incident has occurred.

- An Incident Report is completed by the teacher or authorized adult and filed with the Director.
- The teacher may request a parent/teacher conference.
- The teacher will call the parent(s) as soon as it is possible.
- After successive incident reports a parent/teacher conference is required with the Director. At this time an SST meeting may be required and/or a behavior plan put in place. A behavior plan will outline steps that may result in suspension from school
- After 3 suspensions the student may be eligible for expulsion.
- Based on the severity of the incident, the director may call an SST at any time.

#### **A Word About Harassment**

Harassment is repeated, unwanted and disrespectful attention. It takes many forms, all of which are serious personal and social offenses. YRCS strives to nurture the emotional well being of its whole community. All students are expected to refrain from any comments, attitudes, bullying, physical touching or attentions unwanted by or upsetting another person. It is of the utmost importance that each student develops and practices a respectful sensitivity for the physical and emotional well being of other people in the school.

#### **Media on Campus**

No electronic media, games or toys including but not limited to cell phones or individual music players, will be allowed on campus.

**This policy supersedes all previous policies related to kindergarten discipline.**