



The Acorn School of Charleston Parent Handbook
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Parent Handbook

Welcome to The Acorn School of Charleston! We look forward to a rewarding year as we guide the children through days of work and play, arts and crafts, story, and song. We are also pleased to welcome new parents to the Waldorf community. We imagine our kindergarten and grade school programs as a collaboration between teachers and parents, with each holding the healthy development of the children as the highest priority. We are honored that you have entrusted the care of your child to us.

In cooperation with each family, we strive to nourish the young child's natural sense of wonder and trust, fostering openness toward life and learning while preparing the ground for healthy lifelong development. Working in partnership with each other will help create a strong and nurturing community for all.

School Philosophy

“Although it is highly necessary that each person should be fully awake in later life, the child must be allowed to remain as long as possible in the peaceful, dreamlike condition of pictorial imagination in which his early years of life are passed. For if we allow his organism to grow strong in this non-intellectual way, he will rightly develop in later life the intellectuality needed in the world today. “

-Rudolf Steiner, A Modern Art of Education.

“Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood”

-Fred Rogers, Fred Rogers' Quotes

Creative play is at the heart of our Early Childhood and Kindergarten program. Through imaginative play, children learn to experience and integrate the possibilities of life. Self-initiated play fosters children's abilities to think creatively, problem solve, and develop social relationships, practicing and testing their skills as they tackle more and more difficult tasks. Using the simplest of materials from nature to construct worlds, children flex their imaginations, which grow strong and active; open-ended toys allow children to imitate and transform activities of everyday human life. Participating in play cultivates and strengthens the child's comprehension, memory, and imagination, as well as their growing body.



Play is child-directed and closely monitored by teachers as that social learning and imagination can be guided and supported in a way that is healthy for each child and the class. As the year progresses so does the children's ability to work and play together empathetically. While the children play, the teachers are involved in preparing snacks, cleaning, sewing or other practical activities that the children are welcome to join or emulate. There are opportunities for the children to help set the table, grind the grains, fix toys, and engage in seasonal crafts.

School Hours

First Day of School

We begin the year with the beautiful short ritual called The Rose Ceremony. In a fully developed school, the 8th graders hand a rose to each rising 1st Grade student. At a younger school, the teacher passes the rose to the child as he/she crosses a literal and metaphorical bridge. It is symbolic of the beauty of the passage from one stage to the next and Waldorf properly honors it. All families, regardless of the days of the week your child will attend, are welcome.

The Rose Ceremony program will be held on Wednesday, August 17, 2022, at 11:00. This will last about an hour and the children are dismissed.

The first full day of school is Thursday, August 18, 2022.

The school year ends on Friday, June 9, 2023, at noon.

Arrival

Grade School begins at 8:00 and students are expected to arrive between 8 and 8:15.

The kindergarten students will enter through the front door of the church. (See the new drop off procedures)

In our early childhood Kindergarten program sometimes, the child has difficulty separating from their parent. Lengthy explanations can create more anxiety. You can help your child make the transition easier by showing your own confidence and trust with a matter-of-fact attitude. Please arrive on time as the first few moments of play are especially important for your child in establishing social connections.



New Drop Off Plan

For Grade School Students

Grade school parents are asked to take a left into the grassy area alongside the church's playground fence. Then drive to the two open wooden gates. The children will go through those gates and enter the school via the back door. Mr. Lee will meet them there and guide them into the classroom.

Once the children have gone in, proceed to the left and make a U-turn. Drive out of the grassy area alongside of the gray stone wall that runs along Yeaman's Road. Once at the exit, be aware that other cars may be entering.

Parents who choose to go in with their children may park in the middle of the grassy area if your vehicle does not interfere with the traffic flow. Please enter the school through the back door of the church.

For Kindergarten Students

Kindergarten families are asked to turn right through the entrance gate and drive to the orange cones near the entrance to the church. There the children will be met by their teachers. The students will enter through the main front door. Once the children are inside, drive to the right making a gradual curve and exit that parking lot through the open pathway into the parking area with the tree in the middle of it. Go past the tree to the strip of shrubs and turn right. Drive toward the exit being aware that other cars could be entering the parking lot.

At the start of the kindergarten school year parents may wish to walk their children into the classroom. Please park your vehicle in the lot with the tree. There are approximately 12 parking spots in that lot. Be careful not to block the exit from the other parking lot, as parents will need to drive through. Do not leave your child unattended and be sure to hold their hands when you are crossing traffic. Be committed to guarding your child until they are safely in the building with their teacher.

It is not as complicated as it sounds, and my hunch is that everyone will have it down in a week or two. Reach out with your questions.

Dismissal

The early bird students will be dismissed at 12:15 pm. Children who attend for the full day will be dismissed at 3:00 pm.



New Aftercare Structure

The Acorn School of Charleston is happy to offer an aftercare service for your children. Select the days you would like to request this service through our form, and we'll be in touch with you to confirm the booking.

There will be two school employees, Megan Yale and Julia Keeter who are responsible to the program. Keep in mind there will be a limit on the number of students who can attend. The earlier you can book the spot the more chance there will be to ensure the spot is available.

Please note that our services are \$40 per day between 3 PM–5 PM and will not extend after 5 PM. We currently take payments through Venmo at TheAcornSchoolofCharleston@MeganJulia7. Arrangements for aftercare must be secured and paid for by Monday at noon for the upcoming week.

Emergency and unanticipated aftercare information for contacting an Acorn aftercare staff member will be available the first week of school. Please reach out with any questions.

Preparing for the Kindergarten

Clothing

We ask that the children be dressed in cotton or wool clothing as much as possible. Cotton and wool clothing allow the skin to “breathe.” Please refrain from dressing your child in clothing with media images on them. This includes cartoons, sport symbols and marketing slogans. Having the children wear functional, simple play clothes helps the social climate, leaves them free to create their own images, and shelters them from the pressures of adult consumerism.

Change of Clothing

Please provide an extra set of clearly marked clothes. Include a long-sleeved shirt, pants, a few pair of socks and underwear. Place the clothes in a nice cardboard photo box that are clearly marked with your child's



name. The photo boxes are sold in craft stores. Please check these boxes during the year and replenish as needed.

Indoor/Outdoor Shoes

To keep our classroom clean, we ask that every child has a pair of indoor shoes that stay at school. Please provide a pair of comfortable, plain shoes without ties, such as loafers or Velcro closure shoes for indoors. Bring your child to school in sturdy outdoor shoes. Please do not bring the following to school as their outdoor shoes: moccasins, clogs, crocs, slippers, shoes that have lights, or shoes with wheels.

Outdoor Gear

The kindergarten class operates outside everyday rain or shine. Rain gear is essential. Raincoats, rain pants and boots help the children enjoy rainy days. Please purchase rain pants to keep at school so we can use them when needed. Be sure to clearly label all clothing to be left at school.

Toys

Please keep all toys, stickers, cards, watches, toy jewelry, ornate hair bands and dolls at home. Our school will have an abundance of soft dolls and toys for the children to play with. Toys brought from home are extremely difficult to share. Social exclusion issues often result when items are brought in from outside the classroom.

Festivals

The kindergarten celebrates four festivals during the school year. These seasonal celebrations are an important part of the early childhood program. The festivals take place in the morning, and we make every effort to include families and the greater community. In hosting these festivals, we have found them to nurture all participants regardless of age. The exact dates of these celebrations will be posted in the parent portal on our website. Parental involvement is both fun and a huge boost to preparations needed to make the most of the festivals. Check with your room parent or the Parent Counsel Representative(s) for ways you could help!

Grade School Preparations

Clothing, Toys, Outdoor Gear

All the suggestions for the Early Childhood program apply to the Grade school as well. Attention to clothing, proper outdoor gear and shoes is important as a child grows. We also ask that the same policy



regarding toys be followed for our grade school students. Please monitor the inventory of your child's backpack daily, keeping in mind the school's policies.

Food

We ask that your child be sent with a nutritious lunch and snack that can be eaten without the need of warming or of additional utensils. We find that a child who is allowed to feed themselves without need of assistance gains a great sense of self-reliance.

Arrival

In the first grade and upwards it is important that your child arrive on time. All students should be ready for school and at their desks no later than 8:15 a.m.

School Closure

The Acorn School of Charleston follows the lead of the public schools for weather-related closures. On occasion, because of the unique nature of our school and parent body we will make a call to close the school. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis and be reported as early as possible to parents, understanding that closing the school is disruptive to our families.

Formal Communications

Parent Conferences

Parent conferences are held twice a year. Parents are asked to sign-up for a one-half hour session. This is a special time to share information about your child and to strengthen the bond between the adults who are responsible for the child's healthy development. The dates for the parent-teacher conferences are posted on the school calendar on our website homepage in the parent portal.

The teachers are also happy to meet with parents on an impromptu basis as needed. Please reach out to your teacher to meet if any concern arises.



Class Meeting

These are held quarterly (3 times a year) and are meant to introduce parents to the activities of the classroom. Perhaps the parent will even experience how their child is learning math by marching in a circle! It is also an opportunity for the parents to get acquainted with each other. They tend to be fun, relaxing, and informative. They are also a time to ask questions about the curriculum to gain deeper understanding of the Waldorf pedagogy and reasoning for all the crazy coolness of a Waldorf education. Smiley face.

Parent Enrichment Sessions

During the school year we will offer parent enrichment workshops on Waldorf Education. These events will explore the fundamentals of Waldorf Education and lead to a deeper understanding as to why this method is flourishing all over the world. In the past we have had lectures by leading voices in the movement.

Parent Counsel

The Parent Counsel is the formal organization for coalescing all the energy, questions, enthusiasm, concerns, gifts, and work of the parent body. Generally, one or two people will chair the PA. The committee serves to engage the parents in the work of the school, work that is beyond the capacities of the teachers and board. It serves to bridge communication between the parents, teachers and board of the school and build capacities for envisioning what is needed and fill that need. It is also there to address concerns by pointing parents to the appropriate person or persons to address more serious concerns. It is also, and perhaps, most importantly, the single organization that holds the vision for building community, through activities that are simply fun, through festivals, and through shared work.

Structure for Communication:

We have developed this structure for communicating and find, that when people use it, common misunderstandings and complaints can be avoided. We hold everyone accountable for this.

1. Go directly to the person with whom there is a concern or complaint.
2. If that results in no satisfaction, go to the Director of the Program. Lee for the Grades and Nell for the Early Childhood.
3. If that results in no satisfaction or there is confusion about how to proceed, go to Dr. Renee Meyer who serves as the Ombudsman for the school. Her work is to hear both sides to come to advisement on a situation. She is available by appointment.



Health

Your Child's Health

Waldorf teachers are concerned with the whole child and honor the relationship between health and learning. We welcome conversation about your child's health including past and present illnesses, sleeping habits, sudden changes, and home life rhythms.

If your child is ill or has any communicable disease, please keep them at home. Contact the teacher to let them know about the absence. If your child becomes sick or is injured at school, you will be contacted as soon as possible. If you cannot be reached, the people on the emergency contact form will be called.

Media Guidelines

The Acorn School of Charleston values the healthy development of our students above all else. With that in mind we want to make a clear statement on what we expect from families regarding the child's exposure to all forms of electronic media.

The cultivation of the child's imaginative capacity, their ability to form vivid inner images, is central to Waldorf pedagogy. The rich inner experience provides the foundation for all that will later unfold as creative thought. Our early childhood program is committed to supporting this natural development of the young child and our curriculum is suffused with wonder and imagination.

Research on the destructive influence of media upon creative play and brain development in children is well documented and readily available. ParentFurther, a Search Institute resource for families, is an excellent site for families interested in learning more.

We are all striving human beings and hopefully, parents will choose to come in freedom to a position of enthusiastic support of the school's position on limiting our students' exposure to electronic media. We are stating our recommendations as goals, recognizing that parents are starting this journey with differing attitudes and rules about media use in their homes.

We suggest that parents embrace the following guidelines,

1. That families have a clear "electronics diet" for their children that restricts exposure to picture making machines
2. Ideally the children will have no media exposure during the week. This includes TV, the Internet, video games and smart phones.
3. That the children be allowed limited media exposure on the weekend. These should be programs that the parents have prescreened with commercials edited out.



We would like to explain that we pledge to promote this ideal within our school. Our employees carry cell phones for safety reasons to be able to reach out at any time throughout the school day. However, they have also pledged to keep these items out of sight and use only in emergency situations. Your child's day will be filled with pure creative expression that is brought out from humans without artificial means. It is in this spirit that we ask you to follow those electronic guidelines above as closely as possible.

You will find that this becomes easier and easier the more that families adopt these healthy habits. Not only because it will create a more peaceful mood in the home, but it will be easy to form bonds with like-minded families. You will feel comfortable knowing that your child's friends live with the same set of values. It is a work in progress, but one that is well worth the commitment.

One Waldorf mother described the benefits of less media exposure this way—

“When our daughter, who is four, gets home from school she wanders off to her room and begins creating her world. She lays out silky cloths, sets up colored stones in a row, brings out her little wooden animals, and sitting in front of them on a stool, she begins singing and telling them stories. She has found a way to bring what is inside of her out and into her play, and she does it everywhere she goes. To sit her in front of the television would kill that.”