

Bright Water Waldorf School

Early Childhood Handbook 2016-17

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Welcome

The Early Childhood Handbook will inform you about the classroom environment in an effort to build a healthy bridge between school and home for the children. It is our hope that by working together we can learn and grow in a true spirit of community.

Age and Developmental Guidelines For Our Early Childhood Classes

Bright Water Waldorf School offers Parent and Child, preschool, and kindergarten programs. The Parent and Child program is intended for children 1-3 years old and who attend with your parents or caregivers. The preschool program is intended for students ages 3-5. Children must be 3 years by June 1st and be fully toilet trained to be admitted into the program. Bright Water Waldorf School's kindergarten program is for children ages 4-6 years old. Children must be 4 years old by June 1st for entry into the forthcoming kindergarten class in September. Teachers may make recommendations for children to move up or down depending on child development. Please discuss with your child's teacher with any questions you may have.

A Rhythmic Life

“Early to bed
Early to rise
Will make a child
Healthy, wealthy, and wise.”

The primary goal of education in the first seven years of life is to help the child develop physically in a healthy way, especially in a manner which protects and stimulates their developing senses. This approach provides the proper foundation for the future development of the child's social and academic life. The Early Childhood teachers strive to create an environment in which the young child feels secure, loved, and recognized.

Children are carried along by the rhythms of the world in which they live, from the beating of their heart, their experience of breathing in and out, to their daily patterns of sleeping and waking. Children flourish when their daily activities are arranged in routines that reflect the natural movement and cyclical changes of life. Daily, weekly, and yearly rhythms in our Early Childhood (EC) classes strengthen the sense of well-being in every child.

The preschool and kindergarten activities flow with a sense of “breathing in” and “breathing out,” from the quiet moments of fairy tales and circle time to the active, vigorous periods of work and play. Each day possesses its own special activity which usually takes place during free play period; for example, baking on Wednesdays. A schedule of daily activities is posted in each classroom.

Just as children are carried along by the routines of the school day, so too are they nourished by the routines of home life. As difficult as it can be to establish set meal times and bedtimes, we encourage you to do so. It is very important for young children to have a regular early bedtime; contact your child's teacher if you would like some support in establishing a rhythmic home life.

Communication

Please feel free to contact your child's teacher by email. You will be able to set up a mutually agreeable time to talk.

Lead Teacher E-mail addresses

Robin Laskowski (Honeybees Garden Preschool) – rlaskowski@brightwaterwaldorf.org

Zoe Ryan (Lily Pond Kindergarten) – zryan@brightwaterwaldorf.org

Carolyn McRae (Woodland Kindergarten) — cmcrae@brightwaterwaldorf.org

Milana Norbut (Parent and Child) - mnorbut@brightwaterwaldorf.org

Signing in and Out

Bright Water Waldorf School is a licensed facility and it is therefore required by law that parents sign their children in and out on a daily basis. Your **full legal signature** is required; you must sign for your carpool children as well.

Parents must inform teachers **in writing on the sign in/out sheet** each time their child will go home with another adult; that adult must be on the child's authorized pick-up list on the Parent Portal.

If there are any changes, please inform the school office.

Half Day Program and Full Day Program

The half-day program for preschool and kindergarten ends at **12:15 PM**.

Please pick up your child promptly. There is **no** extended day care available for **half-day** preschool or **half-day** kindergarten. If you need full-day care for your child, you may want to consider enrolling your student in the full-day program.

The full-day programs offers lunch, time for rest, and outdoor activities. Please refrain from picking up children between 1:00-2:30 PM, while children are resting. The extended day program is available for preschool and kindergarten children on an annual contract basis from 3:00 to 6:00 PM.

Regular Nature Walks

The early childhood classes take regular walks to Volunteer Park with their teachers; they may also go on short walks in the neighborhood. These outdoor excursions are opportunities for the children to stretch their limbs, explore their environment, and experience nature and its changing seasons with all their senses. Parents are asked to sign authorization forms at the beginning of the year to allow their children to participate in this weekly activity.

Field Trips

Because rhythm and routine are an important part of the young child's life, field trips are rare. Kindergarten students may take one or two field trips near the end of the school year. Parents will receive individual permission slips with complete details about the field trip in advance of the trip. Parents must provide signed authorization for their child to attend any field trip.

The school ensures the proper number of chaperones, vehicles, and licensed and insured drivers, and adheres to all guidelines required by Washington State Administrative Codes.

Food and Nutrition

“Earth who gives to us this food,
Sun who makes it ripe and good,
Sun above and
Earth below
Loving thanks to you we show.”

In keeping with Bright Water Waldorf School’s wholesome atmosphere and environment, the meal we provide are of high nutritional content. The school accommodates for special dietary needs. If your child has allergies that produce allergic reaction or requires special dietary considerations, you will be asked to complete paperwork detailing those needs.

Our snacks are arranged in a bi-weekly schedule. Children in the full-day kindergarten program bring their own lunch to school each day. All children in preschool bring their own lunch each day. Children should bring their lunch in a basket or sturdy, reusable pack with a cloth napkin. Please do not send lunch in a lunch box with media characters on it. We ask that you pack a balanced, nourishing lunch. Please no soda, candy, or gum. We also ask that you be mindful of excess garbage by sending food in reusable containers. Doing so is an important part of our children’s education.

Items that require refrigeration **must** be sent to school in a sealed thermos or insulated pack. These items include:

- All meat, poultry, fish, seafood, and eggs
- All cooked foods (casseroles, cooked rice, potatoes, pastas, etc.)
- All dairy (yogurt, milk, cheese, sour cream, etc.)
- Cut fruits
- Cooked or raw vegetables

Clothing

The preschool and kindergarten classes are places of active work and play where time is spent outside each day in varied weather conditions. As we know, living in the Northwest often means rain. Hence, to allow each child to experience nature and the elements in an enjoyable way, proper clothing is extremely important. It is not fun to play outside when inappropriately dressed. Therefore, we ask that all children be dressed according to the forecast in multiple layers that can be shed as temperatures rise throughout the day. Please be sure to include winter hats and sun hats that your child likes and is happy to wear. **Once the rain sets in, the children will need rubber boots, rain pants, and a rain coat with a hood, or a rain hat.** Inside the early childhood classrooms, children and adults wear “indoor” shoes or slippers. Please bring a comfortable pair of shoes or slippers for your child that will stay at school.

Each child must have spare clothing at school.

Your child's teacher will provide you with a detailed clothing supply list prior to the start of school. All items should be clearly labeled with your child's name. Wet and/or dirty clothing will be sent home at the end of the day. Please remember to replace anything brought home.

Lost and Found

There is a large Lost and Found basket on the main floor by the back door.

Health

Our teachers take an active interest in your child's health and would be happy to discuss it with you at any time. A well-rested child who is dressed appropriately for the elements and fed a wholesome diet is best prepared to withstand colds and ailments. It is normal, however, for children to experience illnesses as they grow. The lively EC classroom is not a soothing environment for a child who is ill or under-resting. Please keep your child home until he or she is well.

While our teachers are sympathetic to this situation of working parents, we urge parents to arrange in home back-up child care if you must work while your child is unwell. Even after an illness subsides, children may appear healthy in the morning, but are not yet up to the vigorous activity of the early childhood routine. Please allow your child at least one full day of rest after an illness. The teachers will make every effort to support you in keeping your child healthy.

If your child is ill or will be absent for other reasons, please call the school in the morning. If your child becomes ill while at school, you will be notified while your child is made comfortable in the school office until picked up by a parent or guardian.

If a child must take medication at school, the **prescription must come in its original container with the physician's instructions and signature.** Parents must also complete the requisite paperwork with the school office. Children cannot have medicine in their lunch containers; it is handled exclusively by adults. Vitamins and sunscreen are regarded as medicine.

Our Role as Mandated Reporters

As a general note regarding the health and safety of students in our care, all employees of Bright Water Waldorf School are required by the Department of Social and Health Services to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services immediately.

Discipline

In the Waldorf early childhood programs, we strive to understand the nature of the young child and to create a schedule which allows for an appropriate balance of activities. The consistency and predictability of a daily schedule allows the child to know, out of habit, what is expected of them at any given time and aid in transitions from one activity to the next.

Teachers model ways of resolving issues or conflicts among the children. When required, teachers may use “time-in” (instead of “time-out”), a period of time spent working with or helping one of the adults, until the teacher feels that the child is ready to rejoin his or her classmates. No corporal punishment is ever allowed.

If a child’s behavior challenges are persistent, a teacher may request a conference with the parents. The adults can then assess the situation together to find ways to help the child express himself or herself in more socially appropriate ways. Sometimes children can also be helped by making nuanced changes in daily routines. Parents can be of assistance by informing teachers of changes at home that may result in unusual behavior from their child.

Certain behaviors that compromise the health and safety of the child, classmates or staff may result in a child being sent home from school. Teachers exercise discretion and adapt appropriately based on the age of the child. Behaviors for which a child may be sent home include the following:

- Running away.
- Intentionally injuring another person.
- Biting.
- Repeated teasing and bullying.
- Aggressive behavior that results in injury, whether or not it is intentional.
- Uncontrollable disruptive behavior.
- Repeated refusal of teacher’s reasonable guidance.

If a child is sent home for inappropriate behavior, communication between the teacher and parents will be necessary before the child returns to school. The most important aspect of this process is honest, constructive communication between the adults in the child’s life.

When an incident or injury happens, a form will be filled out by the school. An example of our Incident/Injury Report can be found in Appendix A of this handbook.

Media and Young Children

Social Media Guidelines

Posting pictures on Internet sites of BWWS students, teachers, staff or parents in classes, on field trips or at school events is strictly prohibited. BWWS has an assigned photographer and keeps our web presence current.

Philosophy and Purpose Regarding Electronic Media Usage

Modern science is validating what Waldorf teachers have known for a long time: the consumption of media by infants, children and young people inhibits their healthy development.

In today's world, phones, movies, games, music, podcasts, texts, social media, calculators, calendars, word processors, research libraries and other technological and educational tools are contained in the same apparatus and are often operating at the same time. It is increasingly easy and convenient for adults and children to be consumers of media, and we acknowledge there are positive uses of electronic devices and social media for adults. As Waldorf parents and teachers we must embrace the world of technology, and many of us choose to use electronic media ourselves. However, early media consumption by children hinders the educational foundation of inner picture building and transformation, and the strengthening of the will that are essential to Waldorf education. It is therefore critical that parents make careful and conscious decisions about when and how media is introduced to their children.

As Waldorf educators, Bright Water teachers are actively guiding the students to build inner imaginations based on true stories and real world sense experiences. These are the foundation of our children's education; they are moral, beautiful and true. Students take these images into their sleep and come back the next day ready to build the concepts of their education from these pictures, which they have transformed and made their own. Media and virtual images take away from or damage these pictures. They divert children away from direct human interaction and authentic experience. Video games, in particular, do not portray the image of the human being in an authentic experience.

Studies show that a direct experience, as opposed to a virtual one, has a measurable positive impact on brain development throughout childhood and adolescence. Further issues associated with media that are adversely impacting child development are well documented, including Continuous Partial Attention, early consumerism, obesity and the premature sexualization of children.

Media Guidelines

Early Childhood: Birth to Seven

We feel strongly that a screen and electronic media-free early childhood is a significant factor in creating a nourishing environment for the young child. In the early years, children learn by imitation. Exposure to media images does not support the imagination of the growing child. **BWWS asks that parents affirm their commitment not to expose their children to electronic media and screens during their early childhood years. This includes: recorded/broadcasted music, film, video, phones, games.** A media-free childhood is a true gift. Teachers are always happy to assist with transitions toward a media-free environment, and welcome conversations with parents.

Festivals

Our school celebrates the changing seasons and marks the year with festivals. As the year weaves from one festival to another we are provided with meaningful reasons for preparation and celebration. For the young child, the preparation is half the joy. They love decorating their classroom, baking special treats, and learning songs and verses chosen just for that particular festival. The stories that are told give the children a vivid visual understanding of the festival and speak very deeply to them without explanation.

These seasonal festivals are some of the most deeply fulfilling experiences for both young and old. We may also add celebrations that honor the cultural or religious traditions of our enrolled families in any given year. Your teacher and/or class parent will contact you in advance to let you know about opportunities to support the festivals.

Birthday Celebrations

Celebrating birthdays in our EC classes is a JOYOUS occasion! Your child's teacher will inform you about how we celebrate birthdays at Parent Orientation. Children whose birthdays fall outside the school year may have a birthday celebration at school before the year ends.

Early Childhood Parent Evenings

Your child's teacher will schedule a series of class meetings for the year. These meetings are your opportunity to hear from your teacher about how things are going in the class and to learn more about child development and Waldorf education. There is also an important social aspect to these occasions in that they help build a circle of loving adults around the children. Please make every effort for at least one parent to attend your class parent evenings.

Home Visits & Parent and Teacher Conferences

Home visits are scheduled in August or during the fall term as needed and as determined by the teacher. Our teachers are always grateful for communication from you about significant circumstances or changes in your child's life. You need not wait until conference time to discuss your child with his or her teacher. Please feel free to arrange an appointment when you feel one is needed.

Annual Parent-Teacher Conferences provide an opportunity for sharing impressions, successes, concerns, and goals for the child by both parent and teacher. Conferences can deepen the shared understanding of the child as well as strengthen the parent-teacher partnership. Parent-Teacher conferences are held in November. Teachers are available for meetings throughout the year as well, either during "office hours" after class or by appointment.

Our hearts are open wide,
The light streams deep inside,
The stars, the moon, the sun,
Shine down on everyone.
Here on earth we now do stand,
To each and all we give our hand,
Good morning, dear friends.

More Resources — Parenting and Waldorf Education

There are many books about Waldorf education and child development from the Waldorf perspective. Here are a few which have proved helpful to parents with young children.

Lifeways I	Davy and Voors
Lifeways II	Smith & Schaefer
The Way of the Child	A.C. Harwood
Work and Play in Early Childhood	Freya Jaffke
Children at Play	Heidi Britz-Crelius
The Young Child	D. Udo de Haes
Festivals, Family, and Food	Cary and Large
Phases of Childhood	Bernard Lievegoed
The Education of the Child	Rudolf Steiner
You Are Your Child's First Teacher	Rahima Baldwin
Eternal Childhood	Karl Konig
The Incarnating Child	Joan Salter
Over the Rainbow Bridge	Patterson & Bradley
Rhythms of Learning	Roberto Trostli
Parenting for a Healthy Future	Dotty Coplen
Renewing Education	Francis Edmunds