



THE GARLAND SCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK



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*Dear Parents and Friends,
We are very pleased to welcome you and your child to The Garland School. This handbook gives some basic information to get you started, and to help prepare your family for this transition. If you have additional questions about our program or your child's needs, please feel free get in touch with your child's teacher. We look forward to our time together.*

Yours in warmth and joyful anticipation,

The Early Childhood Faculty and Staff

Our School

Mission Statement

Our Mission is to nurture the innate development of the whole child through a nature-based preschool. Integrating the guidance of Rudolf Steiner, Founder of Waldorf Education, Biodynamic Gardening, and Anthroposophy, we emphasize free play within a rhythmic structure to provide a sense of purpose, predictability, and peace. As a developing community, we work to engage our hearts, hands, and minds in meaningful work. The Garland School is a non-profit, non-denominational Waldorf initiative, which serves children from 1 year to 6 years old. We do not discriminate based on race, color, and national or ethnic origin, and we are committed to fostering a fully inclusive school community.

Faculty

The Faculty of the school consists of Kindergarten teachers, Nursery teachers, an Infant teacher, Cook/Teacher's Assistant, Program Director, and Part-time Administrator, and School Mentor. The faculty meets weekly to study the educational works of Rudolf Steiner and others, discuss the children and their progress through the curriculum, and upcoming festivals or other particular calendar events. A part of each meeting is also given over to administrative work. All full-time and part-time teachers take part in specific administrative functions of the school. The whole faculty develops and implements policies in areas of concern/need/interest. Specific areas of concern are as follows:

1. Pedagogical – works on issues concerning the curriculum, festivals, faculty development and study
2. Building and Safety – oversees the use and appearance of our facilities and ensures that school safety policies are being followed
3. Community Relations – arranges for and oversees enrollment outreach activities like open houses, publications like this handbook, faculty professional days, parent-teacher relations and workshops on Waldorf education.

Waldorf Education

Rudolf Steiner, an Austrian born philosopher and natural scientist (1864–1924), founded the first Waldorf School in Germany in 1919. His intention was to found a school movement to renew the art of education so that modern children could develop the full range of their capacities and become free, self-reliant individuals capable of contributing fresh insights and cultural initiatives to the world. A school is itself a cultural initiative. Steiner organized the first Waldorf School with people who believed, as he did, teaching should be free from interference by the state. Steiner and his supporters considered this right to be a governing principle for any school. Therefore, the Garland School is an independent, faculty-run school that is supported by a Board of Directors.

Early Childhood Program Overview

The Nurseries and Kindergarten provide a time of quiet and joyful transition from early childhood to grade school. In a warm, home-like atmosphere, the child's inherent abilities can unfold with an education of painting, storytelling, music, poetry, handcrafts, walks, gardening, baking, and free play. Waldorf education consciously builds a strong foundation during these years for later intellectual growth, but avoids the actual teaching of academic subjects in early childhood. We seek to nurture healthy and eager children who are prepared for their journey of academic and artistic learning through their grade school years. At the Garland School we believe that the experience of rich, imaginative play in early childhood guides children toward becoming free, creative thinkers and decision makers through the remainder of their lives. The Waldorf early childhood curriculum guides the young child through these avenues:

- The teachers are role models who engage in wholesome activities and work. Through **IMITATION**, children develop gross and fine motor skills, a sound basis for self-confidence, and trust in the world.
- A sense of **WONDER** is cultivated through activities in nature and the celebration of seasonal festivals.
- **IMAGINATION** in play, dramatization, and pictorial artistic work is developed as the first step of a cognitive process that is furthered through the academic work of the grade school.
- Daily, weekly and yearly **RHYTHMS** are cultivated in the Early Childhood classrooms. Rhythm gives children security by allowing them to know what is coming next each day. Within the morning, there is a rhythm of activities that balances structured and unstructured time. This rhythm is only interrupted by special birthday celebration days. The children know the days of the week as bread day, painting day, soup day, and puppet show day. Seasonal festivals are culminations of our daily crafts and circle/stories, and mark the rhythm of the year.

In the child's first three years, our work is guided by the philosophies of Dr. Emmi Pikler. Our programs are designed to meet the developmental needs of the very young child in a respectful and nurturing environment, and provide a gentle transition from home into a group care setting. The rhythms for the very young children revolve around receiving unhurried and intentional care, their growing capacities for self-care, and opportunities for free self-initiated movement & play.

Play Areas

The Garland School recognizes the importance of having a cohesive set of playground guidelines. The developmental differences between Infants, Nursery and Kindergarten children guide some of the distinctions. In the Waldorf Early Childhood curriculum, play provides the young children with a safe and acceptable arena in which to explore their relationship to the surrounding world with all its dragons, trolls and wonders. Children need to imagine themselves in situations where they must exhibit mighty strength, perform great deeds and battle untold dangers. This imaginary play allows them to work through their own fears and to learn from their peers. Imaginary play also allows children to model the healthy images provided by adults in our work, in circle time, and ideally, in the world to which they are exposed. We sometimes see the unhealthy images also being worked through in aggressive play and/or pushing acceptable boundaries. When the process of creative free play is available to children they are greatly assisted in their development



Activities that support our curriculum include:

- Free or imaginative play, including dressing up, playing house, constructing play structures, role playing, making believe, etc. with natural materials. One of the premises of the Waldorf approach is that child's play is the most important part of the morning. It is their work. Through play, they learn about sharing, risk taking, and resolving conflict. They also develop language skills, problem solving abilities.
- Outdoor play contributes to the child's overall health and development. In today's busy world, children have fewer opportunities to move around outside. Children are transported everywhere, so there are fewer opportunities to move their bodies and take "risks". Children this age like physical and social challenges, according to their development and capacities. Their accomplishments help build their self-confidence and self-esteem. There is also a great deal of sensory integration that takes place during this outdoor play, that will later support classroom behavior and academic success. We spend a large part of each day outside unless the weather is very inclement. If a child is dressed properly, he or she enjoys playing in all kinds of weather.
- Fiber crafts, sewing, wood crafts
- Drawing with beeswax crayons and painting in watercolor
- Modeling in beeswax
- Singing games and finger plays
- Baking and vegetable chopping
- Story time and puppet shows
- Meal times and setting/clearing table
- Tidying and polishing our toys, sweeping, laundry
- Gardening



Birthdays

Birthdays are very special celebrations in the Early Childhood classrooms. Your teacher will provide more detail information as the time gets closer to your child's birthday.

School Festivals

The seasonal festivals that are celebrated are on the school calendar. Parents are invited to many of the festivals, while others will be just for the children. You will receive more information on festivals from your child's teacher.



The School Day

Arriving Each Day

The morning starts promptly at 8:30 a.m. and the teachers are ready to accept the children in the play yard at this time. Please be sure your child arrives on time each morning. If your child is late, it is more difficult for him/her to enter into the group in the best possible way. When you bring your child to school please sign-in, take them to use bathroom and wash hands, and then say your final goodbye by 8:45. We will be aware of receiving each child to ease the transition. It is easier for the children to have fewer adults in their space as they start their day at school, so morning arrival time is not a good time to speak at length with the teacher. The teachers are always willing to arrange another time to talk.

Dismissal

The Early Childhood morning program ends at 12:30 and our extended day ends at 3:30. The children will be dismissed in the play yard-and must be signed-out. If different pick-up or carpool arrangements are made, inform the teacher directly. Please be on time for picking up your children. Please be on time for the pick-up, as the teachers are transitioning to the afternoon program at 12:45, or on closing down the school at 3:45, and would like to check in briefly with each parent about their child's day.

Snacks and Lunches

Food is one of the best ways we have to direct the health, behavior and moods of our young children. Accordingly, the Garland School serves healthy, organic snacks and lunch each day, as healthy food is part of the curriculum itself. Lunch and Snack are shared at our table with a blessing and good table manners. A sample of the weekly menu is posted on the bulletin board **Please notify your child's teacher as soon as possible of any food allergies.**

Nap and Rest Time

Children are invited to nap and rest. We provide bedding, bed and pillow. If your child has a special **(small and simple)** animal or friend, you may send it along for naptime, and it will stay in the child's sleeper.

Diapering

Diaper changes are a nice, quiet time between child and teacher. It allows for uninterrupted one to one time. The child often looks forward to his or her diaper changing experience each day for this reason. It makes it easy and fun for the teacher as well if these items are available. Please check your child's diaper and wipe supply in the bathroom periodically so that you may replace items when necessary. If your child is in diapers please bring in your preferred brand of the following items:

- One package of diapers, labeled with child's name. If cloth diapers are used, please bring in enough diapers to last the school week.
- A box or package of wipes labeled with your child's name on the outside of the box or package. If cloth wipes are used please bring in enough for the school week.
- A tube of diaper cream, labeled with your child's name, to be left at school and be used if needed.



Clothing and Supplies

We spend a good deal of time outdoors, and we change our clothes frequently. **PLEASE CHECK YOUR CHILDRENS' CLOTHING SUPPLY DAILY, AND CLEARLY LABEL EVERYTHING** with your child's initials (all outerwear and indoor clothes, and even hats, socks, and underwear). An indelible marker is perfect for the job. We provide a clothes bag for extra clothes.

We require an indoor pair of shoes. Indoor shoes help mark the outside/inside transition; keep mud out, and toes safe and warm. These can be any simple, soft-soled shoes (no media images or flashing lights). Make sure they are not slippery on the bottom, comfy and are easy for your child to change into. No ties on indoor shoes, please. Shoes that fall off inhibit the child's movement as well as compromise their safety. For these reasons no flip flops, clogs, dress shoes or backless shoes please.

- Please send a **labeled change of seasonably appropriate clothing to be stored in the bags are provided by the school.** We ask that each bag contains: **indoor shoes, 2 pairs of pants, 2 underwear, 2 pairs of socks, 2 shirts and a sweater (when seasonably appropriate.)**
- No media themes or distracting clothing please. What the child wears will influence his/her mood and play. They need simple, practical clothing that supports healthy movement, climbing and running.
- Rain boots, jacket and rain pants are essential and must be brought each day during seasons that it rains, as mud is an irresistible play medium. During the rainy months please add into your child's clothes bag an extra pair of rain pants plus an extra raincoat.
- Cold weather requirements include waterproof snow pants, snow boots, scarf, hat and mittens. Added extras in their clothes bag for this time of year should include an extra pair of mittens and extra hat.



When the weather is cold we ask that each child come to school with 3 layers on the top and two layers on the bottom. It is better to have several layers that can come off rather than not enough. **MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE CHILDREN NEED TO BE WARM AND COMFORTABLE.** If the young child's body is working too hard to stay warm then it is difficult for him or her to enjoy outside playtime. Since we start the day outside please have your child dressed appropriately at drop off. We appreciate your cooperation.

Thank you in Advance!

Bridging Your Child's Transition to School

Separation Anxiety

As the children begin the school year, and possibly the new experience of school, some may experience difficulty with separating from parents at arrival time. Here are some suggestions:

1. Demonstrate trust in the teacher and in the decision you have made on your child's behalf. Parents may inadvertently give their children a double message. The teacher says everything is fine and safe while the parent may be supporting the child's apprehension and fear by staying too long at school. While the child is seeking comfort and feeling anxious about the parent's inevitable departure, s/he is not free to have her experience of school, playmates, and activities. Until the child receives a positive message from both parent and teacher, the child can remain confused, and the adjustment period can be prolonged. Show your child that you have confidence in his ability to be part of this new experience.
2. Make partings brief. Each child will approach goodbyes in a different way. Some seem to handle the situation fairly well, some show signs of distress and settle down shortly, and others are extremely upset with parting. Separation anxiety is actually a positive sign of the child's love for the parent and her feelings of attachment. It can vary with the child's age, ability to deal with change in general, and with stresses in life outside of school. In any case, this shift from home to school cannot occur fully without this parting. During the period of transition and adjustment, the parent may want to acknowledge and accept the child's feelings. The sadness at "losing" the parent is very real, and she should be allowed to admit these feelings. At the same time, it is important for the teacher and parent to remain positive about the situation. Show understanding and support for the child's feelings, assure her that you will return, and leave her with a hug and a confident smile. Prolonging the parting prolongs the adjustment and the accompanying crying or tantrums.

Some aspects of the transition

One of the effects of acclimating to a higher volume of peer (or social) interactions may be a social exhaustion. Parents and teachers working in concert can do much to remedy this situation. Children may need more quiet time in their afternoons at home, etc. If a child is complaining about school or struggling with transitions, parents are encouraged to speak with their child's teacher. Some children have a more difficult time with transitions. Adjusting to a group of new playmates can be challenging for even the most outgoing young child. Many children at some point during each school year will say they do not like school or that they do not want to go to school. It is not unusual for children to express complaints about school after school breaks and during the middle of the long winter season. A discussion between parent and teacher can often provide insight into the child's experience for both parent and teacher. The Garland School appreciates parent perspectives in this area. Please feel free to reach out to your child's teacher with any questions or concerns.

Toys

Please have your child keep his or her own toys at home. This will avoid heartbreak over lost or damaged toys. Also we prefer that during the school day, the children use our classroom toys that are made of simple, natural materials, which encourage and stimulate imaginative play.

Media

We strongly recommend that families do not begin exposure to media or work towards eliminating screen time, including television, videos, and computer time as much as possible in your home. We are aware that it can be hard to change, and we are happy to assist you with ideas in limiting media in your home. The American Pediatric association has recommended no Media before the age of 2. We have observed that children who watch television tend to have greater difficulty entering into imaginative play. Their play mimics TV characters, movements, and scenarios instead of arising out of the child's own creative forces. There is much research available on some of the negative effects of media on children's behavior, achievement, and health. Please ask us if you would like more information or book suggestions on this topic.

Behavior Challenges

Positive encouragement is always the best path in response to behavior challenges with young children. In general the Waldorf Early Childhood teacher provides guidance by modeling appropriate behavior with the children and with other adults. Positive redirection and storytelling often work in areas where modeling does not. Much of the communication between teacher and student happens publicly, in front of the other children, so they all receive the same message. In cases of "bullying", the teacher protects while working with *all* the students involved. Sometimes children just need to be held in the rocking chair for a bit of rest until they are "not tired anymore and can find their soft and gentle hands." Biting is a special challenge, as it can be seen in the younger child, and yet distressing to peers and parents. Whenever there is a child harmed we must write an incident report. With repeated biting, we will have to work together to devise an intervention that keeps other children safe. If biting is ongoing, having a parent shadow their child for the day, able to intervene and also observe the situations that are most likely to lead to biting, may be necessary. The teacher and parents may also team up to create consistency between home and school. If you have any concern about a behavior issue at school please bring it to your teacher's attention as soon as you are able so that we can resolve the issue in a timely and supportive manner. We try to meet the needs of all our students, but there may be times where the needs of the student and the needs of the school are not well matched.

Absence and Illness

Please call the office before 8:30am if, for any reason, your child is unable to attend school. The best and really only place where your child can be properly nursed through an illness is at home. Classrooms are busy, social, and sometimes noisy places...not the right environment for a sick (or even overly-fatigued) child. If your child has a fever of 100° or above, deep cough, rash, diarrhea or any infectious condition, please call the school office before 8:30am and do not send him or her back to school until the child has been symptom free for 24 hours. If your child becomes sick at school, you will be contacted through the information you provided for your Emergency Contacts, so that your child can be picked up. These emergency contacts are listed on your enrollment form. It is important that you keep the office up-to-date with any changes.

Sunrise (Before Care) and Sunset (After Care) Programs

Care for your child is available before and after school as part of our Sunrise and Sunset programs. The Sunrise program is based on community need and can provide care from 8 a.m. until the beginning of school at 8:30. The Sunset program provides care from 3:30 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. Registration is required for regular attendance in these programs. For rates please refer to the Before and After Care Policy Registration form included in the Enrollment packet.

Drop-in days

Parents are welcome to add afternoons or aftercare when there is space and with teacher permission. Parents may sign up for drop-ins, after consulting with the Program Director to ensure space is available. The full day drop-in rate (8:30–3:30) is \$77. The morning (8:30–12:30) drop-in rate is \$44. The afternoon (12:30–3:30) drop-in rate is \$33. Aftercare drop-in is \$20, and Beforecare drop-in is \$10.

The School Community

Parent Involvement

We have an all-school meeting noted on the school calendar, which sets up parent involvement in the school. As a small, community-based school, parent participation takes many different forms and is essential to the school's functioning and success. Parents can sign up for a volunteer role, hosting a workshop/book study/potluck, and provide direct support of classroom activities. Parents also take an active role in supporting the school through committees such as: fundraising, development, finance, buildings and grounds, and the newsletter.



Parent Evenings

We have two parent meetings during the school year. These are noted on the school calendar. These are important evenings for sharing of information and learning. Specific topics and activities are chosen for each parent evening. Examples include rhythm, creative play, nutrition, the festivals, media, and painting. Attendance is *strongly encouraged* as it directly affects the bridge between home and school, and the mutual work of raising the children in partnership between teachers and parents.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Conferences are scheduled twice a year, one in the fall and one in the spring. The dates are on the school calendar. A sign-up sheet will be posted before the week of conferences.

Administrative Matters

School Cancellations

The Garland school follows the Windham South East Supervisory Union (WSESU) school closures for inclement weather. We do not follow any delays. If the school is closed due to inclement weather, an announcement can be heard on local radio stations or by checking the WSESU website, www.wssu.k12.vt.us. An email confirming the closing will be sent no later than 7:30 a.m.

Tuition Assistance and Public Funding

If you are a family in need, please ask us for an application for our tuition assistance. For Vermont residents, if eligible, you must apply first for Vermont State Childcare Subsidy through the Winston Prouty Family Center 802-257-7852 or go http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/forms_ccfap. The Garland School participates in Public Prek funding for all Vermont 3-5 year olds and CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program).

Tuition Payment Policy

We are a small school that runs on a small budget. The school relies on timely payments to pay teachers for their work and the rent for our school space. Tuition can be paid in full, otherwise we divide the tuition into ten monthly payments. Payments are due on the first of the month, and after the 15th day, accounts are charged a late fee of \$10.00. For unseen financial difficulties, please contact the Administrator to make arrangements. If payments are over 60 days overdue, then all Garland's school services are suspended until balance is paid in full or an alternative arrangement has been made. You will receive your monthly bill from Chris Yost, our bookkeeper.

Late Pick-Up Policy

Our late pick-up policy is as follows: The first five minutes are free of charge after the regularly scheduled pick-up times of 12:30, 3:30 or 5:00. After the initial five minutes of lateness there will be a one-dollar charge for **each additional minute of lateness**. The time will be noted on our late pickup checklist and families will be billed accordingly. We understand that lateness can occur due to unforeseen circumstances, but we have this policy to ensure consideration of our teachers, so that they can complete their work when their day ends.

Exclusion

The decision to exclude a student from The Garland School is a very serious one and will only be taken in response to serious issues. Exclusion is a last resort and should be only undertaken after extended problem solving efforts involving parents and the school. Exclusion would only occur when there has been serious and/or persistent behavior that threatens the education, or the safety and welfare of the student, the teacher, and/or classmates. The decision to exclude a student will be made in conjunction by the Program Director and The administrator. A board member will present for that discussion, but the decision rests with the administrators who will promptly communicate the decision to the parents directly.

Confidentiality

All staff observes confidentiality in regard to family/child records and family information.

We look forward to working together this year.

*Receive the children in reverence, educate them with love,
and send them forth in freedom. —Rudolf Steiner*

*What is essential is that the child discovers as much as possible
for himself. If we help him to perform all the tasks he meets, we
deprive him of just this, which is of greatest importance for his
intellectual development ... Therefore, we allow a child to
experience his environment in his individual way, and according
to his individual development.—Emmi Pikler*

Do less. Observe more. Enjoy most.—Magda Gerber