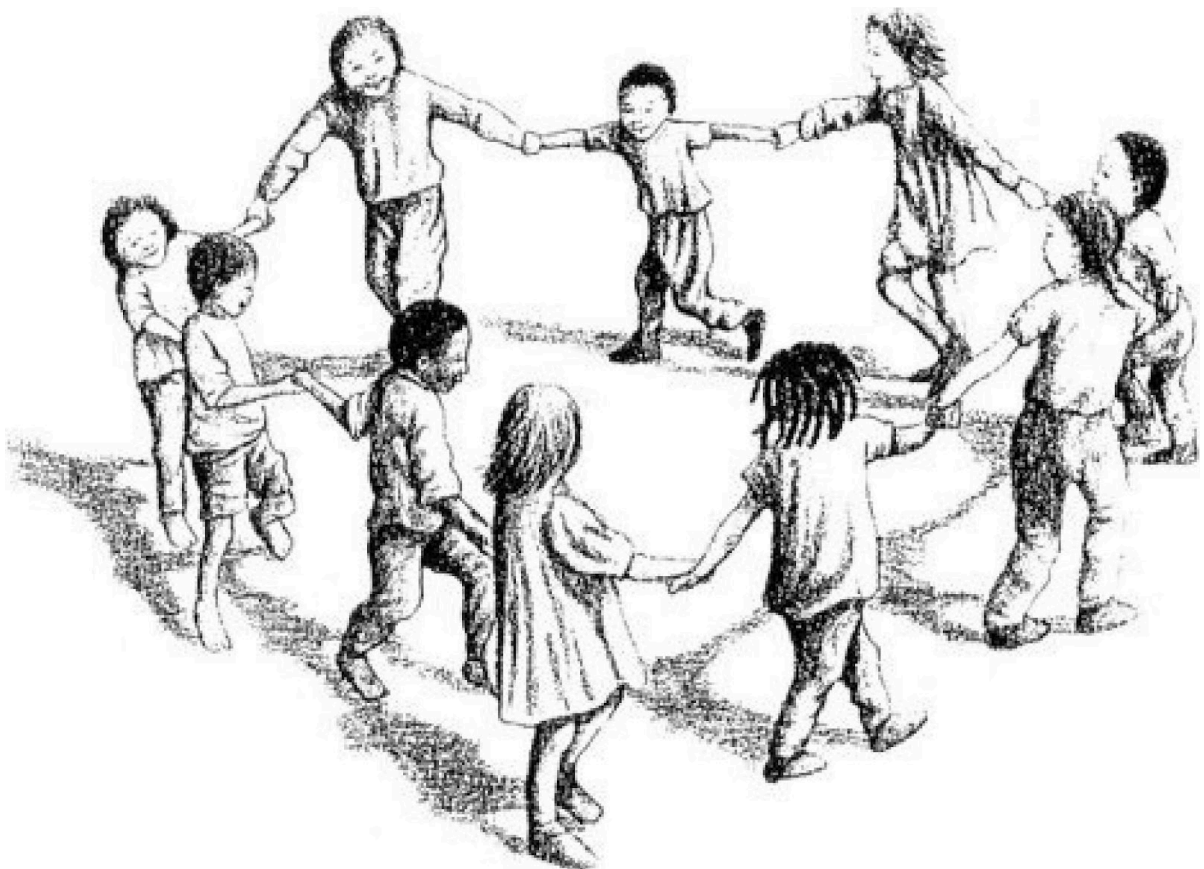


Kindergarten Handbook



SunRidge Charter School



The kindergarten offers a joyful, nurturing setting that inspires the imagination through creative play, storytelling, puppetry, music, movement, and art. Emphasis is placed on the healthy development of the physical body through practical activities that include handwork, crafts, baking, cooking, gardening, digging, sweeping, nature walks, and plenty of time outdoors. Responsibility for self and others is encouraged through attention to sharing, caring, and taking care of our kindergarten classroom and play yard. The foundations of written language and literacy are laid with emphasis on the oral traditions of storytelling, puppetry, and song. The foundations of mathematics are nurtured through rhythmic movement, music, and the practical activities of cooking, sewing, gardening, and carpentry. Attention and care of the natural world and its beauty lay a healthy foundation for more precise scientific explorations in the later years.

Dear Parents,

Each year as the kindergarten doors open in August, children, parents, and teachers are equally excited. The parents depart with one last goodbye kiss and hug, entrusting their dear little ones to our care. The child's day is full of creative play, painting or baking, singing, and stories. When the parents arrive to collect their children and eagerly question them about the day's events, they are most often answered by dreamy gazes. "Nothing" may be the reply to the question, "What did you do today in Kindergarten?"

The child of this age has a different kind of memory and lives in the wonder of the present moment. Often, the kindergarten experiences may unveil themselves in a song or verse in the bathtub or before sleep. Sometimes a simple statement from the parent such as, "It was soup day" will lead to a gently unfolding tale from your child.

As teachers, we want to build a bridge between home and kindergarten. We hope this booklet begins building that bridge by shedding light on our work with the children. More than anything else, we want you to feel that we are always open to your questions and concerns and that through the school we may grow together as parents, teachers, and children into a true community.

~ The Kindergarten Team

Kindergarten Guidelines:

Clothing ~ Please have children wear clothing appropriate for work and play. There will be a few opportunities for special occasion clothes. We ask that you send your child to school in clothing that is clean, comfortable, sturdy, and good for exploratory play in dirt, sand, and water. Please avoid clothing with large logos, media or cartoon characters, or bold and distracting prints and images.

- **Natural fibers** ~ Clothing made from cotton and wool fibers have a warming and breathing quality, which is vital to the young child as their bodies are growing and developing.
- **Layers** ~ Temperatures often fluctuate greatly from the start of the day to the end. Please dress children in layers that can come off as the day grows warmer (make sure arms and legs are covered at the beginning of the day). Children's midriffs must be covered at all times.
- **Label Clothing** ~ Please label all outerwear such as coats, hats, sweaters, rain gear, and rain boots with your child's name, as well as the items in their change of clothes bag.
- **Hats** ~ Sun hats are provided by the kindergarten. Please provide a simple warm hat that can fit under a raincoat hood.
- **Change of Clothes** ~ Please include the following items in your child's change of clothes bag: shirts, pants, shorts, underwear, 3 pairs of socks, and a plastic bag. Check their change of clothes bag periodically to replenish as needed, and label every item.
- **Jewelry** ~ We ask that jewelry be left at home. It can cause distraction and easily get lost or broken. If your child has pierced ears, please send them to school with studs only.
- **Rain Gear** ~ We go outside every day rain or shine, and the children may get wet and sometimes muddy. Please provide rain gear: a raincoat long enough to cover clothing and roomy enough for warm layers underneath, rain boots, and rain pants. Please, no umbrellas.

Shoes/Boots:

- Please provide shoes your child can put on and take off independently.
- Shoes need to be comfortable, secure, cover toes, and support the feet while running
- Please **no light-up shoes**, flip-flops, or clogs without back straps.
- Please provide a pair of rain boots to stay at school.
- Indoor shoes must provide traction and support for skipping, hopping, jumping, and dancing activities. Avoid shoes without a closed heel. Toes should be covered and soles must be waterproof.



Toys From Home ~ We ask that children not bring toys from home. If your child needs a bridge between home and school, a toy could journey in the car and be waiting for the child at the end of the school day. If a child does bring a toy to school, we have the toy "rest" in the child's backpack. Sometimes the children like to bring something to show the class. In this case, the child can check with the teacher, and then we will make time during the day for the child to share what was brought. If you have any questions, please speak to your child's teacher.

Pets ~ Dogs and cats and other pets are not allowed on campus.

Logistics and Protocols:

Drop-off ~ Kindergarten classes are in session Monday-Friday from 8:30 am to 12:45 pm. The kindergarten yard is not open until 8:15 am. If you arrive before 8:30 am, you are responsible for supervising your child until you leave. Kindergarten children are not to be dropped off in the parking lot. All school rules apply to the playground before and after school.

Pick-up ~ Please wait outside the classroom until your child is released. If running late, please call the office, 707-824-2844. If your child is not picked up within 10 minutes of dismissal time, expect a phone call from the school. If you need to pick your child up early, please email the office and teachers in advance. Come to the office to sign your child out. The office will call the classroom and your child will be brought to the office. Children need to be with an adult until they reach their vehicles. When someone other than a family member will be picking up your child, please provide written communication in advance.

Kindergarten Play Yard Boundaries ~ The kindergarten play yard boundary is the fence line of the kindergarten play yard. Kindergarteners spend the outdoor portion of the day in the play yard under the supervision of teachers. Gates should remain closed at all times and will be locked after 2:45 pm and on the weekends.

Attendance/Tardiness ~ Regular attendance is important for healthy social development. Tardiness also affects your child's social development. When children are late, they miss out on vital social bonding that takes place first thing in the morning. If your child is tardy, please check in at the office before walking your child to the classroom. School funding depends on the daily attendance of each child enrolled, so please try to arrange family vacation times to coincide with the school vacations.

Absences ~ If your child will be absent, please notify the office in the morning by calling 707-824-2844.

Illness ~ Students must be fever-free (without medication) for 24 hours before returning to school.

Please keep your child home if they have any of the following:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Persistent cough
- Severe headache
- Earache
- Red, puffy, or draining eyes
- Wheezing, difficulty breathing
- Suspicious rash
- Temperature over 100 degrees
- Stomachache

Field Trips ~ We plan field trips each year to visit farms and gardens in the community. Transportation is provided by school bus. There may be a small donation request to help cover the cost of these trips. Please note that as per district requirements, field trips begin and end at school.

Walkabout Days ~ Once a month, the kindergarten class goes to various destinations in the neighborhood. We invite parent volunteers.

Emergency Forms ~ We must be able to reach a parent or responsible party in case of an emergency. Please keep your emergency card current and include cell phone numbers.

Meals:

Snack ~ Four days each week we provide a hearty, organic snack for the children which includes a grain. Water and herbal tea are provided. Once a week, we have a soup-making day and ask that families bring organic vegetables to contribute. Once each week, we ask parents to send a hearty snack and plenty of water. Individual snacks can be sent in a child-size backpack. On walk-about days, students can get the school-provided snack free of charge.

Lunch ~ Students may bring lunch from home. School lunches are available from the school meal program free of charge. We ask that you sign your child up for these meals ahead of time but know that if they forget their lunch on any given day they will receive the school-provided lunch.

Seasonal Celebrations:

Celebration of the seasons is at the heart of the SunRidge School kindergarten. Because young children live so fully into the world that surrounds them, our celebrations primarily focus on nature's changing processes. We want the children to experience the seasons with a time of preparation, a time of peak experience, and a time for letting go and saying goodbye.

As the year weaves through the seasons, the children love learning songs and verses chosen just for that time of year, making seasonal crafts, and baking special treats. The stories told give the children a pictorial understanding of nature's processes and speak very deeply to them without our need to explain.

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 the nature table, bringing flowers or stones that they have found to add to what the teacher has already provided for the season. You might like to let your child have a small table at home.

Birthday Celebrations:

- **Five-year** birthdays are celebrated with a candle, songs, and a birthday wish book. Your child will receive the gift of a purple felt crown. The five-year-old birthdays are often celebrated together in seasonal groups to soften the level of direct attention the child has to bear.
- **Six-year** birthdays are celebrated with a special story, candle, songs, and birthday wish book. Your child will receive a golden felt crown, and silk cape dyed from marigolds as a gift. Six-year-old birthdays are celebrated on or close to their birthday. Summer birthdays are celebrated on the child's half-birthday.
- **Birthday Party Invitations:** For any home birthday celebrations, please deliver invitations outside of school, unless you are inviting all the children in the class.
- *All birthday celebrations are done with their classmates and teachers only.*

Parent Volunteers:

We greatly appreciate having parent helpers in and outside the classroom. Parent participation in the life of the school takes many different forms and is essential to the school's success. Whether working in the classroom, on a walkabout, in the garden, or on a committee, parent volunteers provide much-needed and valued assistance.

We would like to offer a few guidelines for your visit to ensure the optimum environment is created for the children. Our goal is to be present for the children and to create a space for them to fully live in their imaginations.

Adult Etiquette in the Classroom:

- **Sign-in** ~ All school volunteers are required to sign in and out at the office.
- **Confidentiality Agreement** ~ Parent volunteers are asked to sign a Confidentiality Agreement for School Volunteers.
- **Movement** ~ The young child is looking for movements and gestures to imitate, be it sewing, cutting vegetables, or setting the table. We ask that you pay attention to your posture and demonstrate gestures that are meaningful and beautiful. To accomplish this, it usually means we only need to slow down. Even our breathing will become deeper.
- **Speech** ~ Talk less and model more. If you do speak, statements are preferred over questions. Words are spoken sparingly, simply, and with care. It is pleasant to work quietly, perhaps humming softly.
- **Scents** ~ Please minimize the scented products you wear.
- **Phone Use** ~ We ask that you turn off your phones while in the kindergarten yard and classrooms. If you need to use your phone, step outside of the kindergarten yard. Phones can be used on field trips.

Communication:

As in any aspect of human endeavor, clear communication is an ongoing goal. We hope you feel comfortable coming to us with your questions and concerns. If a difficulty arises, please come to your teacher directly, as soon as possible. We have established various modes through which to maintain open lines of communication.

Calling Teacher ~ Messages during the day can be left at the office at 707-824-2844. Teachers have individual voicemail boxes where confidential messages can be left.

Email ~ Teachers have a school email address. You can send messages to them through this email. Your teacher will inform you when they check their emails daily. If you have an urgent matter please call the office directly. Teachers will respond to emails within 48 hours.

Weekly Class Letter / Bulletin ~ SunRidge distributes a bi-monthly school bulletin to all families via Parent Square. Please read it. In addition, weekly kindergarten letters will update you on what we are doing in the classroom and will provide details for upcoming kindergarten and school functions.

Parent / Teacher Conferences ~ We hold conferences in the fall. We meet with each child's parents to talk specifically about physical, academic, and social development. We have portfolios to share and offer an opportunity to ask questions and voice any concerns. Additional meetings may be requested by the teacher or parents at other times of the year.

Before School ~ The teacher's focus is on the children as they arrive in the morning, therefore the preferred form of any morning communication is by written note. If your child has had a particularly difficult evening, night, or morning, a few written words to that effect will be helpful for us. We can offer brief check-ins after school and will happily set up conferences as needed.

Parent Evenings ~ We schedule regular parent evenings throughout the year. These meetings are a blend of a "Window into the Classroom", artistic or musical activities, and educational topics. Waldorf's methodology is deep and rich, and these meetings provide us with the opportunity to share our knowledge about developing children. Parent meetings are also an essential component in creating the partnership that will nurture and support your child. Our parent evenings help to build the foundation of the adult community at our school, providing a container to share the joys and challenges of parenting and teaching in these modern times. We ask that each household be represented at these meetings.

Kindergarten Discipline Procedures:

To maintain a safe and productive educational environment, the following discipline procedures are utilized:

Regular Correction Techniques ~ In kindergarten, teachers use verbal and nonverbal cues to redirect student behavior. Methods are respectful and sensitive to the individual student. The emphasis is on the positive behavior desired, rather than on the student and what he or she has done wrong. They also use DADD: **D**isapprove of negative behavior, **A**ffirm the child knows how to interact, **D**iscover what precipitated the behavior, **D**o-over, give the child a chance to do it over.

Possible Consequences ~ Verbal reminders, redirection into alternate activity, or separation from group activity are among the natural consequences for those who do not follow established procedures and/or do not respond to regular correction requests. At the discretion of the teacher, the parent will be notified.

- **Verbal Reminder:** A verbal reminder is a clear and direct verbal communication to the student that provides the child with a clear picture of what behavior is expected.

- **Redirection into Alternate Activity:** When possible, an effort is made to redirect the child to an activity in which they can be successful.
- **Separation from the Group or Activity ~** If the child's behavior is disruptive to the group activity and the child is not responding to verbal reminders or redirection, it may be necessary to ask the child to sit out. The child would be invited back into the activity once they have demonstrated responsiveness to the teacher. If the child is unable to contain their behavior appropriately, it may be necessary for the teacher to engage the help of our administrative team for "calm and return" in the office. If none of these techniques are successful, the parents may be notified to pick up the child.
- **Home Notification ~**
 - When a student's behavior is especially disruptive, parents will be notified.
 - If a child exhibits chronic behavior issues, the teacher will convene a Student Success Team (SST) meeting with parents and other support staff to help address the needs of the child and the class.

Student Success Team (SST) ~ SunRidge offers additional support in the form of a Student Success Team meeting. A teacher or parent may request an SST to form a supportive network and to create an action plan to assist the student in attaining maximum success. The team is typically composed of the Director, the Educational Support Teacher, the class teacher, and the parents.



Life At Home

Sleep ~ Young children need plenty of sleep, 12 hours, especially during the school year. Consistent early bedtimes (7:00 pm) will provide your child with the restorative sleep they need and a nurturing rhythm to their day.

Before the age of 7, children are not as connected to their sense of warmth, so parents have to help them develop this sense by keeping them warm when the weather is cold.

Media ~ Since the kindergarten child learns primarily through imitation, they need models worthy of imitation. The strong influence media has on young children is, thus, quite visible. The greatest loss may be the dimming effect it has on a child's imagination. Imagination provides the foundation for learning and growth, but a child may get "stuck" in creative play, unable to play anything but a superhero, transformer, or television character. Some children may lose their imagination and cannot "think" of anything to play, or they cannot sit still during a story being told. Story time becomes a distressing time instead of a time of wonderment and delight. A child may speak in the tone of a certain character or machine, where speech is reduced to the sound of mechanical noises. There are other noticeable effects of media on children as well, such as uneasiness and lack of attention span or perseverance.

- Our preference, as supported by brain research, is to eliminate screen activities for the young child. We respect your efforts and applaud your sincere desire to provide the very best environment for your child.
- We encourage the complete elimination of electronic media during the school week, from Sunday evening to Friday after school.
 - **For our purposes, media is considered to include:**
 - Television, videos, movies, video games, computer games, social media and phone apps
 - Additionally, Saturday morning fare, adult-oriented programming, and PG-rated and above movies are strongly discouraged.

Alternatives to media we encourage you to explore ~

- Domestic work: cooking, washing dishes, folding laundry, gardening, and carpentry.
- Reading and looking at children's literature and artistic activities such as drawing, painting, modeling beeswax or dough and craft making.
- Jumping rope, gymnastics, hiking, biking and other outdoor activities

Social Development ~ Cooperative, imaginative group exercises that focus on movement for the joy of movement itself meet the physical, emotional, and social needs of young children. During the school week, we suggest that families provide a quiet afternoon to give ample rest from a busy morning and to digest images from stories. Additionally, we encourage you to postpone involvement in competitive and or organized team sports or performance-oriented activities since they awaken a self-consciousness in young children that is better delayed to a later stage of development.

Living Arts ~ Much learning takes place when children are invited to participate in practical and domestic activities such as folding clothes, setting the table, cleaning, meal preparation, laundry, pet care, gardening, sewing, sweeping, machine repair, and woodwork.

We encourage you to invite your child to work by your side at this young age to lay the foundation for healthy habits and independent chores.

Community ~ We view the kindergarten as a single community of families, rather than two separate classes. The kindergarten is also a part of the larger school community that is all working together to bring the children an education imbued with goodness, beauty, and truth. You can support this effort by making connections with families outside of your child's class and by working to build community at all levels within the school.

The healthy social life is found when in the mirror of each human heart the whole community finds its reflection, and when in the community the virtue of each one is living.
– Adapted from Rudolf Steiner

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Suggested Reading/ Listening:

Online Resources

Simplicity Parenting with Kim John Payne ~ <https://www.simplicityparenting.com/>
Collection of 10-15 minute parenting advice videos.

You and Your Child's Health ~ <http://youandyourchildshealth.org/>
Collection of parenting articles by Anthroposopical Dr. Susan Johnson

Lifeways ~ Resources for parents, teachers, and caregivers
<https://lifewaysnorthamerica.org/>

Books

Simplicity Parenting by Kim John Payne (*Highly recommend reading this book*)

The Soul of Discipline by Kim John Payne

Lifeways by Davy and Voors

You Are Your Child's First Teacher by Rahima Baldwin

Parenting Well in the Media Age by Gloria DeGaetano

Free to Learn: Introduction to Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Education by Lynne Oldfield

Festivals, Family, and Food by Carney and Large

Seven Times the Sun by Darian