

Early Childhood Community Handbook 2024-2025

Physical & Mailing Address

SFWS Campus

26 Puesta del Sol, Santa Fe, NM 87508

Website

www.santafewaldorf.org

Primary School Office Phone: 505.467.6430

General Information Email: info@santafewaldorf.org

Office Hours Email: jgutierrez@santafewaldorf.org

Primary School Office Hours

8:45 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday

Snow Delays and Closings

We will follow SFPS closures. You can find updates on our website, or watch local media stations for current school closure information.

Introduction to Early Childhood

A Waldorf early childhood environment is designed to allow for the gentle unfolding of a child's development. During these early years, children learn through imitation; carefully chosen activities in the classroom provide opportunities for modeling and direction. Movement is foundational to learning, and both large motor and fine motor skills are encouraged through play and practical activities. The school supports the child's ability to stand harmoniously in the world of nature with a sense of awe and wonder.

Rhythm in the Life of a Child

Strong weekly rhythms provide structure which is both familiar and varied. Each early childhood class has regularly occurring weekly activities such as painting, beeswax modeling, movement, baking, drawing, and sewing. The mornings are full of artistic activity, nature activities such as a long walk, music in the pentatonic modality, as well as stories and rhymes. Within the weekly rhythm there is a daily rhythm of expansion and contraction which can be reassuring to the child: activities move from active to focused, and from calm to more active.

Festival Life

In addition to the daily activities described above, there is an ongoing celebration of the seasons. The children will celebrate harvest in the autumn, create an indoor Evergreen Spiral as the winter holidays draw near, plant grass in their own Spring baskets and dance around a Maypole. Festivals from the various families' religious and social cultures are honored. Celebrating together lays the groundwork for cultural and social diversity. The teachers will discuss with parents in parent meetings how parents can be involved in the festival celebrations. Parents are invited to attend, and volunteer to support, school festivals.

Birthdays

Birthdays in a Waldorf early childhood class acknowledge the child's journey into life. The birthday child's parents may attend a birthday celebration during which a special birthday snack and story are offered. Sometimes, the birthday child likes to pass out a small, simple token such as a shell, pretty stone or a feather to all of the friends in the class. Your teacher will arrange with you the details for your child's birthday.

Early Childhood Curricular Activities

Creative Play

During their extensive play time, both inside and outside, the children are provided with a variety of natural materials and playthings. Such creative play fosters in the child the ability to focus and concentrate as well as to imagine. During this time, the teacher is involved in preparing the snack, sewing, cleaning, making toys or any number of practical activities in which the children are welcome to participate. An atmosphere of work and play permeates the room.

Circle Time

The children are brought together to sing songs, recite verses, play games and learn finger plays. These may be connected to the seasons, a particular fairy tale or story, or just part of the general lore of childhood. These activities provide the beginnings of memory work, a foundation for healthy brain development, language and vocabulary development as well as training in listening and observing.

Artistic and Craft Activity

Group activities include: wet-on-wet watercolor painting, beeswax modeling, crayon drawing, finger crocheting and knitting, simple sewing, paper cutting and punching, and crafts with wool and wood. These activities lay the groundwork for artistic techniques, aid in the development of fine motor skills, and encourage the child's natural sense of beauty, color and form.

Music

Singing is woven throughout the day as a soothing and joyful activity. Sometimes simple instruments such as chimes and kinder harps are available for the children's use.

Snack Time

Fresh, healthy snacks are served daily, family-style. Very often the children help set the table and prepare the snack. An emphasis on gratitude for the food and on table manners sets the stage for lifelong social skills.

Outdoor Play

Extensive outdoor play allows the children to experience the natural world. Seasonal gardening and outdoor play are valued activities. Outdoor experience hones the child's observation skills and breeds a deep, comfortable relationship with nature.

Story Time

The teacher offers a daily story, perhaps a nature story, a sequential tale, a puppet play or a fairy tale. After two or three weeks of telling the story, the children might "perform" the story for one another. Listening to stories helps children achieve fluid expression and an increased vocabulary. Listening to stories also develops their memory and imaginative abilities.

Life Skills

Children learn through doing by tending to the domestic life of the classroom (cooking, cleaning, repairing and gardening) and self-care (toileting, hand washing and dressing oneself). Involving the children in practical activities lays the foundation for organizational skills needed in adult life.

Readiness

In order to ensure a successful time at school, children need to be ready for our programs. The Parents & Tots Program is designed for young children from the ages of birth to three to attend with a parent or guardian. The faculty will assess the child's readiness for preschool, kindergarten, and first grade.

Bridge From Home To School

Sleep

Sufficient sleep is essential. Children of this age group need 10-12 hours of sleep each day, in addition to a nap. A rhythm of regular bedtime routines with a simple verse or song quietly shared at the end of each day helps calm the child before sleep. There is a "siesta" time incorporated into the afternoon for all of the early childhood classes.

Rhythm

Periods of activity followed by periods of quiet allow children to regulate themselves. Mealtimes at the same time each day following the same activity each time can offer a sense of rhythm and security.

Electronic Media & "Screen Time"

Whenever possible, please be exceedingly conscious of your child's exposure to movies, television, tablets, monitors and phones. From our observations as educators, children benefit most from an elimination of these elements entirely during these younger years.

In our learning environment, exposure to electronic media can manifest itself in a number of detrimental ways for the child who experiences it regularly, and for the other children as well. Materials related to the influence of electronic media in this critical phase of child development will be available and this topic will be addressed more fully in parent meetings.

Home Visits

Early childhood teachers generally visit the child's home after a child has been enrolled in the school. The visit serves to reinforce the ideal of parent and teacher working together in guiding the child in his or her development. It also assists in creating clear communication between home and school.

Toys

We prefer that during school hours, children play with school toys. Play items are chosen specifically to nourish the young child and foster imagination. Please leave personal toys at home. In the event that a child has something special to share with class, please notify the teacher and know that the item will be placed in the teacher's care until the appropriate time. For

children who need a comfort from home, please speak with the teacher.

Dress Code

The best clothes are comfortable play clothes made of a breathable fabric such as cotton or wool, which are ideal for layering. Temperatures can vary extremely so layering is very helpful. Warmth and protection are priorities over fashion at this age. Snow pants are required on snow days. Clothing should be free of animated characters and writing. Hats are required outdoors.

Body Ornamentation

We ask parents to support our request that children not come to school with ornamentation such as temporary tattoos, face paint, glitter spray, earrings that dangle, sun glasses and removable hair accessories, as these items can provide great distraction for your child and/or others in the class. Many of the items can pose safety risks as well.

Hair

We ask that parents please refrain from providing extreme hairstyles such as excessive ornaments, unusual colors or distracting cuts for their child(ren) while enrolled.

Shoes

Shoes for school need to be sturdy to protect the feet. Tennis shoes and other closed toe shoes are appropriate for school. They allow the foot to flex appropriately, supporting the body's movement. Rain boots or snow boots will be necessary only as weather permits.

The following are not suitable shoes in early childhood: flip-flops, clogs, cowboy boots, sandals, Crocs, fancy dress shoes, any shoe with an elevated heel, Heelies, and shoes that light-up.

Afternoon Rhythm

Lunch

Nutritious foods such as leftovers from dinner, sandwiches, boiled eggs, pastas with vegetables, whole grains, wraps, and burritos make a fine lunch. The food needs to be ready to eat: eggs peeled, apples cut into bite sizes, or soup warm in a thermos. It is the aim of the school to have the early childhood environment free of processed and prepackaged foods. (If you must use a pre-packaged food, please be sure it contains no more than three or four ingredients that you cannot recognize.) Lunches can be brought in a basket or any other container that does not have advertising or media figures on it. It is easiest for children to 'see' their meal when there are minimal containers. One box with multiple compartments works best. Please send a cloth napkin. We practice leave-no-trace and pack-in pack-out principles.

Nap & Afternoon Playtime

Naptime needs to be a regular consistent rhythm. Our afternoon rhythm consists of rest (as

stories are told, songs quietly drifting), crafts and outside playtime. All children will be expected to participate in quiet rest time.

Parent Participation

Parent Evenings

Parents are encouraged to support the program by taking an interest in their children's activities. Attendance at parent evenings throughout the year is essential for developing an understanding about early childhood education as well as building relationships with other parents.

Parent Conferences

Parents are expected to attend individual parent teacher conferences held twice a year. A conference can also be requested at any time during the year as needed. Conferences allow parents and teachers to share observations, experiences, and expectations regarding the child.

Early Childhood "Class Parent(s)"

Each Class Parent helps their respective teacher with organizing parent evenings, starting the phone tree, helping with classroom preparation and cleaning up, seasonal activities and other areas where help is needed, and delegating tasks when appropriate.

Wellness Policy

Please keep your child home if he or she seems ill (i.e. sore throat, green nasal discharge, productive cough, cold, fever, diarrhea, upset stomach, recent vomiting, conjunctivitis, earache, impetigo, etc.). The school does not have facilities to care for children who are too ill to remain in class. If your child has any communicable conditions such as strep throat, or any childhood diseases such as lice, scabies, etc., please notify the school immediately. Please do not have your child return to school until he or she has been symptom-free, and non-medicated, for 24 hours.

A child who becomes ill at school will be given a quiet place to rest while a parent is called. In the event of a serious medical emergency, your child will be taken to Christus Saint Vincent Hospital. As part of an annual back-to-school process, parents/guardians are required to sign an emergency medical authorization in case an emergency arises when a parent is unavailable. We must have current and correct phone numbers so that we can reach you in case of illness.

State law prohibits the school from dispensing any medication to the children without written permission. Permission to dispense medication, including pain relievers, must be indicated by the parent on the student record. If your child must take some medication during school please discuss with the teacher. Homeopathic remedies, cough drops, chewable vitamins are considered medication and cannot be left in lunch boxes for children to self-administer; they

must be administered by the teacher and only with a corresponding approval present in the student's record.

In accordance with state law, the school is required to have each child's updated immunization record or immunization exemption form on file with the school office.

General Safety

Emergencies

There is a complete *Emergency Procedures Manual* for the use of employees; all Early Childhood teachers have current First Aid and CPR certifications. Teachers carry cell phones for emergency use. All teachers have easy access to children's first aid and emergency kits located inside and outdoors. In the case of a major injury, the teachers will call 911 and the parents' emergency contact. Basic first aid will be given until medical help arrives. Children will always be sent to the nearest hospital (Christus Saint Vincent Hospital) if such an extreme measure is needed.

Minor Injury

In the case of a minor injury, the teachers may administer basic first aid. The parents will be informed of any notable injuries at pickup (or after school via phone if the child is picked up by another adult).

Bathroom Safety

The children are sent to use the bathroom independently and individually. Diapers and pull-ups are not allowed at school except in very short term transitions for the youngest children to support home to school attendance. If a child needs assistance, there will be a teacher or assistant nearby to respond.

Physical Safety

Safety is of the utmost concern and therefore the children are always within eyesight and/or earshot of an approved adult.

Climbing Trees & Stick Play

Children may climb trees at school while under adult supervision. They may not climb higher than a teacher can reach. The children may not play with sticks longer than their arms, unless used as a walking stick, a tool (digging, for example), or for building. There is no running while holding a stick and no pointing of sticks towards another person. We do not allow children to throw sticks, stones or sand.

Knife & Tool Safety

Teachers have very clear boundaries regarding knife usage during class activities such as snack

preparation. The students use choppers for cutting vegetables while under the supervision of their teachers. Six-year-old children may use small whittling knives under the supervision of their teacher(s) only after they have shown proficiency in understanding basic knife safety. Woodworking tools are used in one-on-one situations between a child and a supervising adult.

Driving & Parking Information

Speed Limit On Puesta Del Sol

The speed limit on Puesta del Sol is 15 mph when children are present and 25 mph when children are not present. Your consideration when traveling to and from our school is appreciated, not only for your safety and that of your family, but for everyone, including our neighbors and animals.

Parking Lot Guidelines

School drop-off and pick-up times are very busy. Please support us in keeping your children safe by following these very important parking lot guidelines:

- Speed limit is a maximum of 5 mph throughout the campus.
- Don't use cell phones while driving anywhere on campus. Please set a good example and avoid accidents—give your full attention to the children/ students and to general safety.
- The parking lot is one way only. Turn right and circle counterclockwise.
- Please do not park in front of the shelter.
- When walking, keep your child with you and please use designated crosswalks and pathways.
- There is no parking on Puesta del Sol. County regulations prohibit parking on Puesta del Sol.

Program Licensing Requirements For Early Childhood Student Drop-Off & Pick-Up

In order to comply with licensing, parents are required to walk children to the early childhood building in the mornings between 8:30 - 9:00 am and fill out the sheet provided for the day.

Pick up time is at 2:45 pm. At pick-up times, parents must sign out with the time of pick-up. Early Childhood parents are expected to sign children out upon entering the Early Childhood grounds, at which point the parents become responsible for the supervision of the child. Children must be accompanied to the parking lot by a parent or other designated adult. Do not allow children to walk by themselves to the car.

Children may be picked up from school only by designated adults, parents or guardians. Parents must indicate designated adults for drop-off and pick-up within the student record and, as a

courtesy, should also inform the teacher and school office of any change in status around those who are able to drop-off and pick-up their child(ren). Teachers may ask for an I.D. to verify designated adults.

Snow Days & Two-Hour Delays

We base school closures and delays on the determinations made by the Santa Fe Public Schools, which are available on local TV and radio stations and their websites. In the event of a snow day or delay:

1. The announcement will be posted on our website: www.santafewaldorf.org and communicated through text messages.
2. If Santa Fe Public Schools cancels school or calls a two-hour delay, our class will also cancel school or have a two-hour delay. If there is a delay, school will start at 10:30 am.

The Santa Fe Public Schools sometimes switch from “delayed” to “closed,” so check the school closure listings again right before leaving home.

3. Once the school day has begun, if the weather turns bad and public schools decide to close early, our class does not automatically close early. On those days, we will end at the normal dismissal time. We encourage parents who are concerned about hazardous travel to pick up their child(ren) early.
4. If there is snow on a day that Santa Fe Public Schools is not in session but we are in session, we will make a decision about whether or not to have a snow day or a 2-hour delay. Please check the website or the local TV stations for snow closing announcements.

Your safety is important, so make your own judgment about road conditions in your area before setting out for school. We would rather that you are safe than at school on time. A few details on days when the school has a two-hour delay:

- Please do not drop off Early Childhood students before 10:30 am, as there will be no supervision.
- Please be sure your child has had something to eat before arriving, as classes will go directly to circle time rather than to snack.
- Always use your own discretion in evaluating your local road conditions when deciding whether to bring your child(ren) to school during hazardous weather conditions.

Four Week Trial Period

There is a four-week trial period for all new students at the beginning of the year to allow the teachers to discern the child’s readiness to be with a group and if there are any specific behaviors needing attention. Some observations may require a longer time and then a meeting would be arranged for an evaluation.

Behavior Policy

In the early childhood class setting, play, storytelling, movement, artistic experience, and the room environment all positively affect children's behavior and support a safe class culture. Teachers use examples, redirection, active listening, reflection and statements of expectations as a means for supporting healthy student behavior. Redirection may include having a child stay close to a teacher while they are playing or giving the child a "helping job". Teachers will speak with the parents about behavioral challenges as they arise. If a child is extremely disruptive or threatening to the well being of another child or the class, parents will be asked to take the child home. When behaviors become consistently problematic, a meeting of teacher(s) and parent(s) will be scheduled and an evaluation process will begin (see below).

The intention is to have home and school cooperating in support of the child and the class. In some circumstances, teachers may suggest providing appropriate professional support (e.g. therapists, occupational therapists, and speech pathologists) for their child.

If the teachers and parents cannot collectively support the child and the child is consistently disruptive or poses a danger to other children, the family may be asked to keep the child home or find a different care option. In order to maintain a positive and respectful community culture, we ask that parents keep conversations about behavioral concerns between themselves and the teachers.

Incident Reports

If a child hurts another child or gets hurt beyond the basic first aid support provided in the classroom, an *Incident Report* will be filed with the office and reviewed with the families involved. Parents will be notified as soon as possible if their child is involved in an incident requiring such a report.

Evaluation Process

If there are abnormal and concerning behaviors with a child, the teacher will:

- Initiate a meeting with the parents to speak about the behavior
- Document all observations and incidents
- Speak with colleagues about their observations and ask for support

If concerning behavior continues, the teacher will work with the following options:

- Meet with the parents within one week of the first meeting (with a colleague present) and formulate a Success Plan
- Arrange a way of updating parents about the behaviors (daily or weekly, written or verbal)
- Document the meeting with the parents

- Ask parents to provide professional support (if needed)
- Document any changes in the classroom, especially positive

If there is no progress and the physical and emotional safety of the class is compromised the teacher will:

- Meet with parents within one week of the last meeting (with a colleague present) to review the Success Plan
- Document the meeting with the parents
- Notify parents about the possibility of dismissal and talk through other care options

What To Bring To School

Some of these items will remain at the school throughout the year. Please label all items clearly with a permanent marker.

Hat

Children are required to wear hats when outside; a sunhat or warm winter hat, depending on the weather.

Slippers

Simple non-slip styles such as moccasins or ballet slippers are recommended. Slippers should be enclosed at the heel. Please check to make sure that they fit properly and don't go flying with a kick, or fall off with a hop. Besides protecting the feet, they need to support movement.

Long Sleeve Cotton Shirt

If weather changes, this item is often needed for layering (flannel or cotton knit). 15

Change of Clothes

To include:

- At least one (and not to exceed) two pairs of socks,
- Two pairs of underwear,
- Two shirts and
- Two pairs of long pants.

We tell the children that these are the "just in case" clothes, not for dress-up.

Winter Wear

These items are critical during colder seasons and during periods of inclement weather:

- Windbreaker/Rain Jacket
- Wind/ Rain pants

- Warm hat
- Waterproof mittens (Consider attaching to the coat. Please label.)
- Snowsuit
- Coat
- Rain boots/Snow boots
- Warm under layers (A snug layer under with a loose layer on top)
- Wool leggings
- Wool socks (Available at sporting goods stores)

Nap Items

- One small blanket from home
- One small pillow-crib size or couch size
- Crib sheet

Outdoor Gear and Considerations

The most important thing you can do to ensure your child has a positive experience in our Early Childhood program is to dress them well for each season. Enjoying the seasonal weather conditions is key to our program, as all classes spend a significant period of time outside each day.

Each child is to be fully dressed for the day when arriving at school – teachers will not be responsible for dressing the children. In November, when it is usually time to wear warm winter gear each day, the teacher will inform parents. To ensure your child is comfortable throughout the day, all items should be in good condition. Having clothing at school your child won't wear at home makes it challenging for them at school.

Warm Weather Gear

- On sunny days, please apply sunscreen (if using) before bringing your child to school and remember to send them with a sunhat. **Hats are required at all times outside.**
- **Pants** are recommended even in hot weather (instead of shorts or skirts/dresses); during our daily forest adventures, we will walk alongside cactus, goat heads, and brambles.
- **Supportive walking shoes** are required for each day. **Please do not send children in flip-flops or crocs.**

Where to Obtain Gear

- You don't have to spend a lot of money on expensive wool sweaters. Any old woolen sweaters of larger sizes found at thrift stores can be 'felted' down to your child's size by putting them in the washing machine and dryer. Each fall, we do our best to arrange bulk ordering at discount prices, notify you of sales and organize clothing exchanges.
- There are many places to order soft wool products that are not itchy to sensitive skin. These can be purchased online by searching "wool" + any of these names/brands: A Toy Garden (also sells Puddle Gear), Janus, Engel, Ruskovilla. When buying Ruskovilla

products, some school families suggest buying a larger size top than you might initially think, but properly sized bottoms so that they are not bunched in their boots.

- Also consider used or felted wool to make mitten liners (recommended under the Puddle mittens) and thick wool pants.

Maintaining Your Gear

- Once it is really **wet and muddy**, waterproof gear can be washed by itself at home on the rinse cycle (without soap - to preserve the waterproofing a little longer), and then either drip dry or put it in a low-heat dryer cycle. Jackets may be slightly less muddy than pants, so you may get a few days of wear out of them before needing to rinse them.
- 'Tear Aid' is a product that PuddleGear recommends for maintaining waterproof gear. This product is much more effective than duct tape in the long run (duct tape gets gummy), but for a short-term fix, duct tape works in a pinch.
- Kookaburra or Eucalan wool wash products protect the lanolin in the wool which maintains the warm-when-wet properties. When aired out at night, wool does not hold odors and when worn under other layers, only needs to be washed every few weeks.
- If you find that your child's boots are damp on the inside, the "Peet Power Cell Boot Dryer" will be helpful.

Cold Weather Gear

- **Wool** is most effective fiber for layering. *Please do not dress your child in cotton clothing or cotton socks for cool/cold weather.* Wool stays warm when wet and also wicks moisture, keeping children at an even body temperature even if they get sweaty.
- **Silk** being a natural fiber keeps bodies warm despite its thin weight. You may find soft mixtures of silk and wool.
- **Layers!** It is easier to take layers off as needed than to warm children already chilled.
- During winter months waterproof gear is required since we will be outside for extended periods of time. **Various layers under waterproof gear** are easier to regulate with our wide range of temperatures. **Water repellant snow pants get wet** very quickly when the snow begins to melt and are too warm as our winter sun beams down.
- **Abeko PuddleGear** (BEST mittens - you might want to buy two pairs) or **Polarn O'Pyret** (www.rainbusters.ie) for waterproof gear.
- Please consider alternatives to the REI Cascade rain gear - it has been noted to fall apart quickly and is not breathable.
- In the wintertime, wearing two layers of wool long underwear underneath a thick wool sweater and fleece pants is the most effective way to layer children under their waterproof gear in order to keep them warm without feeling too bulky.
- If a child is dressed in "overall" (bib-style) rain pants, please pull the bibs **OVER** their clothing layers instead of putting the layers over the bibs. This way they do not have to completely undress in order to go to the bathroom.

- Pants with elastic waists instead of buttons or snaps are more comfortable for children (and easier to pull up and down for going to the bathroom).
- Please consider purchasing the Ruskovilla balaclava (also called the "wool hood"); it fits perfectly under a snug jacket hood, covers their ears, and goes several inches down their shoulders and chest. You can also layer the balaclava under a wool hat when it is really chilly.
- **Bogs boots** ('high' style) are the footwear that we recommend and are quite warm when paired with wool socks.

Thank you for your commitment to supporting your child and keeping them warm and dry all year round. This will enable them to enjoy the outdoor environment through all kinds of weather.