

Mountain Oak School



Merry Gold Kindergarten

**2009-2010
Parent
Handbook**



*"Receive the child in reverence,
Educate the child in love,
Let the child go forth in freedom."*

Rudolf Steiner, Founder of Waldorf Education

Welcome to Mountain Oak School's

Merry Gold Kindergarten

The Waldorf Kindergarten program provides the foundation for a life-long love of learning where our goal is to nurture a sense of wonder and curiosity in the young child, while encouraging reverence for the goodness of life.

Play is the heart of the Waldorf Kindergarten program and through the child's own free, imaginative play, a broad range of cognitive, social, and linguistic skills are developed. Natural, simple materials such as pieces of tree branches, seashells, beeswax, and handcrafted puppets encourage children to create their own games and stories during play.

Balancing free play with structured activities, the children engage in daily and weekly activities including watercolor painting, handwork, seasonal crafts, cooking, movement, and household activities.

The kindergarten program is also rich in storytelling, puppetry, song, and poetry, which enlivens and expands the child's language base, and strengthens comprehension and listening skills. Crafts, handwork, games, and regular outdoor play encourage the healthy growth of the child's body. Weekly walks to the park provide a first-hand experience of nature through the seasons.

In the loving and creative atmosphere of the kindergarten, young children acquire the confidence and discipline they will need for the challenging academic work of grade school.



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ABSENCES AND TARDINESS

If there are to be any planned changes to your child's school day, including arriving late or leaving early, we request that a written note of explanation be sent to the teacher prior to the occurrence.

Children arriving late (i.e. arriving to class after the classroom door has been closed) must be brought to the office to receive a late pass. The child will remain in the office and wait to be retrieved when circle is complete. Help your child establish healthy life habits by arriving on time everyday!

BIRTHDAYS

Celebrating a child's birthday in the kindergarten is given much thought and care. Before the child's birthday arrives, the teacher will inform the parents about any preparations. We will try to celebrate his/her school birthday on the actual birth date or a date as close to it as possible. For those with summer birthdays, we will celebrate on a day during the last weeks of school. For home celebrations, we ask that invitations not be distributed at school.

CAMERAS

We request that video cameras or photo cameras not be part of our birthday celebrations, or festivals/event celebrations like the Lantern Walk or Spiral Garden. At these events a certain mood is attempted and cameras have proven to be a distraction to this attempt. It may be appropriate to take photos (without flash) after the event. Please check with your teacher first. Thank you.

CLASS VISITS

The teachers welcome and encourage parents to spend a morning with their child's class. During the first four to six weeks, however, we ask that parents not visit the class. This is the time needed for the teacher and children to learn the routines and procedures and establish a class rhythm. Please speak with the teacher about scheduling a date for a classroom visit.

CLOTHING

The kindergarten is an active environment - full of opportunities for children to play and work both inside and outside –therefore, clothing that fits well, (not too loose nor too tight), is best suited. Every morning, up to an hour is spent outside, so it is important that your child be dressed appropriately. Natural fibers allow the child's body to breathe properly and when dressed in layers, aid in retaining body heat. A wide brimmed hat, (one that your child would like to wear), is essential for sun protection year-round. Here in Prescott, the weather is prone to be erratic during the monsoon season as well as during the cooler months. During wet weather, please send your child with a raincoat to keep your

child dry as we do go out in light rains. During cooler weather please send sweater/sweat shirt, leg coverings, hats, gloves and coat every day. A labeled sweater or sweatshirt should be left at the school all year long.

These articles of clothing will be left at school all year:

- A pair of indoor slippers (a well-fitted soft slipper with a back part that fits up around the heel.)
- Change of clothing (socks, underwear, pants, top, tights) in a solid color cotton drawstring bag, no larger than 18” high x 14” wide.
- Sun hat

Every child must keep a full change of clothes at school. Please label all the clothes with your child’s name. It is the parents’ responsibility to check their child’s extra clothes bag regularly to replenish any items that are used and sent home to wash. As the weather gets colder, the spare clothing needs to reflect this change.

When considering your child’s wardrobe, try to remember that much of what is sold today is trendy and not suitable for a child’s healthy development. There is a tendency for children’s clothing to be strongly influenced by fashion and the media. We want the child to shine out rather than the media, and we hope that the children can come to school *free of any imposed images on their clothing*.

Unacceptable: T-shirts with prominent advertising, writing, pictures of musical groups or cartoon-like characters, neon colors (even if solid), completely black outfits, camouflage, lycra form-fitting clothing, dancewear, bare midriffs, sport-cut tank tops, low-cut necklines, cut-offs, or torn clothing of any kind. For health reasons, and the distraction these provide, electromagnetic wiring (i.e. lights and/or sounds) or mechanical devices on any clothing, *including shoes (light-up shoes”)*, is unacceptable.

Outdoor Shoes: All children need sturdy outdoor play shoes. Canvas shoes, tennis shoes, or leather shoes are ideal. In warm weather, sandals with toe and ankle straps are acceptable. On cold or rainy days, warm boots or rain boots are recommended. Tie shoes with laces are better than Velcro, zipper or slip-on shoes. The older children enjoy helping the younger ones to tie their shoes, and before you know it, they learn also! Because many different hands help with shoe tying (adults and other children), please make sure that the shoe-laces are in good condition and can be tied easily. It is a great task for children to learn to tie their shoes. The hand-eye coordination employed in shoe-tying is a pre-reading skill that should be mastered before a child enters first grade.

Though cowboy/girl boots may be somewhat indigenous to this area, they have slippery soles and make it difficult to safely run or climb. The same goes for dress leather or plastic slip-on shoes (jellies, Crocs and sandals). Thongs and flip-flops are also unacceptable.

DISCIPLINE

In kindergarten the teacher strives to create a consistent daily routine which allows the child to know, out of habit, what is expected of them at any given time. The teacher also models ways of resolving conflicts among the children. When required, problematic behavior is initially re-directed. If the inappropriate behavior continues, the teacher may continue to re-direct the child, give verbal warnings, or a “time-in” (instead of a “time-out”) a period of time spent working with or helping an adult until the teacher feels that the child is ready to rejoin classmates. Students intentionally hurting other students or staff are sent to the office. The teacher will contact parents/guardians by phone or send a report home.

Serious misbehaviors, such as hitting, biting, chronic tardiness and other problematic behaviors result in 1) a phone call home from the teacher and 2) a meeting with the teacher and parent/guardians, who will work with the student to correct this behavior, or 3) in rare circumstances, administrative interventions that follow the Mountain Oak School Discipline Guidelines.

NOTE: Please refer to the Mountain Oak School Grades Handbook and the Mountain Oak School Policy Manual for further detail in regard to the school discipline policy and guidelines. These documents are available in the front office.

FIRST GRADE ENTRY

Children who turn six years old by September 1st will be considered for that year’s first grade class. Children who are six by September 1st do not automatically go on to the first grade, but are assessed as outlined below. We recognize that children develop and mature at different rates. To assess and determine first grade readiness, we look at the whole child, including their chronological age, academic, and developmental readiness.

We assess three major developmental areas: movement skills, cognitive development, and social/emotional behavior. The responsibility for recommending the readiness of kindergarten students for the first grade lies with the kindergarten class teacher with possible input from other faculty members and/or specialists. We understand the critical and emotional nature of this issue and that opinions may vary greatly from the school’s and parent’s point of view. The concept of first grade readiness is an extremely important factor in both the child’s life as well as the life of a healthy Waldorf first grade class. Research and our own experience over the years suggest that the older the children are the more successful and happy they are in the more strenuous academic and social settings of the 1st grade. We encourage parents to seriously and thoroughly consider the teacher’s determinations before deciding on first grade enrollment.

In addition, the school recommends the following books in order to further the family's understanding of how and why the kindergarten holds the child in the manner it does.

You are Your Child's First Teacher: Rahima Baldwin

The Magical Child: Joseph Chilton Pearce

Endangered Minds: Dr. Jane Healy

Evolution's End: Joseph Chilton Pearce

Miseducation and The Hurried Child: David Elkind

Lifeways: Gudrun Davy & Bon Voors

GIFT GIVING

Well-intended acts of generosity can leave those children who have not brought gifts to share feeling uncomfortable. If your child wishes to exchange cards or gifts (e.g. Christmas, Birthday Invitations, Valentines) with classmates, please do so off campus. If a particular situation arises for you and you need further clarification, please see your teacher.

HEAD LICE

Head lice are tiny bugs that infest the hair and scalp. They lay tiny, clear, whitish-yellowish eggs, called nits, along strands of hair, usually close to the scalp. The eggs are about the size of a period (.). They are oval in shape, and they adhere to the hair. They are difficult and tiresome to remove.

Any sign of itchiness may be an indication of head lice. If we find a nit (even only one) in your child's hair, we must isolate your child until he/she is picked up. Please, let us all cooperate and do everything we can to avoid head lice. We recommend weekly head lice checks at home. If your child has become infested, please notify your teacher at the first sign of infestation.

We will not allow a child back into the kindergarten unless he or she is nit-free and lice-free. We urge you to do your utmost to help us control the head lice problem. We have to pay particular attention in the kindergarten due to the nature of the children's play and their close contact.

HEALTH

If your child will not be in school due to illness, please inform the office by 8:00 a.m. The best place where your child can be nursed through an illness is at home. Kindergarten is a busy and sometimes noisy place. It is not the right environment for a sick child. Children who are too sick to join us outside are not ready to return to school. We do not have the staffing to stay with sick children

inside. Please do not send your child to school with a fever, deep cough, rash, diarrhea, non-clear runny nose, or any infectious condition. While children can be very adamant about wanting to come to school, it is far better for them to remain at home until they are strong and perky, and ready for a busy active morning. A helpful rule of thumb is to keep your child home for a twenty-four-hour period (24 hours) after fever or vomiting occurs.

HOME VISITS

As kindergarten teachers, we see that having parents come and visit for a morning is a wonderful event for all of us. Perhaps the most important reason is that the parents can afterwards hold this picture or imagination of how their children spend a good portion of their week. It creates a connectedness to their child's life. Through this, perhaps, a better understanding of their child results.

The same principle holds true for us as teachers, when we are invited into a child's home for a short visit. We can hold an imagining of the children's home environments: where they sleep; what they see out of their windows; and so on, aiding in our attempts to deepen our understanding of any child--and therefore address his or her needs more fully. It is of course a welcome opportunity for parents and teachers to come together in a different context. For the children it is usually a thrilling event, to see their teacher not only out-in-the-world, but in *their* house!

Home visits are recommended but are at the discretion of the parents. If you would like to invite the teacher for a home visit please speak with the teacher.

KINDERGARTEN HOURS

The hours of the Kindergarten Program are 8:15 until 12:00. It is very important that your child arrive at the classroom on time by 8:15. If the children arrive late, they miss some of the valuable social bonding that occurs during the morning activity and creative playtime and may experience difficulties integrating into the established day. Students may be dropped off no earlier than 7:45 AM.

MEDIA

There is a growing awareness in our society that media, in all its forms, produces harmful effects in children even beyond the content and time given to it. We have found that its influence significantly interferes with what the Waldorf-inspired kindergarten has to offer the young child. Childhood is a time to learn through activity, nature, playing creatively, and integrating socially. In order to enhance your child's development, we ask that you reduce or eliminate the

influence of media from your young child's life.

This can be difficult, but eliminating electronic media (television, videos, computers and computer games) during the school week is especially important. The quality of the kindergarten experience depends on your commitment to this matter and in supporting the school in your home life. So does the integrity of your choice to send your child to Mountain Oak School, which takes a stand on the media. For those parents who are confronting this issue for the first time, we are interested in being of help and supportive in any way we can.

NOON PICK UP

The kindergarten morning ends at 12:00 noon. For your child's welfare, please be prompt. A parent's lateness can cause unnecessary stress and worry for the child. If you are unavoidably delayed, please leave a message at the school office so we can assure your child and make necessary arrangements. Parents are permitted to wait quietly by the porch outside of the kindergarten classroom until the teacher opens the door and dismisses the students. If your child is to be picked up by someone other than yourself, please let the office and teacher know by sending a note or telephoning as soon as possible. No child will be released to anyone who is not on the emergency card or on a signed and dated note. Any child who is not picked up by 12:15pm will go to the KinderCare room for pick-up. This is a charge for all children who go to KinderCare.

PARENT MEETINGS AND PARENT PARTICIPATION

There are a small number of parent meetings for kindergarten parents during the school year. Although our school cannot mandate parents to attend all of the class meetings, we strongly insist that you do so to better understand and support what your child is doing at school and why. Class meetings are a time for the teacher to share information with you about kindergarten life and Waldorf education. The class meetings are a wonderful and important time to explore questions, have informative conversations, and get to know other parents and your child's teacher.

It is essential for the well-being of your child that the parents and teacher communicate, so please feel free to talk with the teacher. Right before and right after school are not the best times to talk so please let the teacher know you need to speak to her and she will arrange a time. If your child is having special difficulties, the teacher will arrange special conferences to address the problems. Please approach the teacher with any concerns you have.

We encourage parent participation in the life of the kindergarten through taking an interest in their children's activities, attending parent evenings, workshops and study groups when offered.

Student Progress Report Conferences are held twice a year. These individual conferences, for parents/guardians, are held in late fall and in the spring. Conferences are an excellent time for both teacher and parent/guardian to share experiences of the child. Also, several times during the year festivals are celebrated in which parent involvement plays an important part. The festivals are connected to the seasons and the teacher will notify you of the dates well in advance. Parent participation in festivals is welcomed.

RHYTHM

From the moment of birth a child's life is regulated by rhythm; for example, breathing in and breathing out, sleeping and waking. We are surrounded by rhythm in nature through day and night, the seven days of the week, the monthly moon phases, and the cycle of the year. When children experience a healthy rhythm, their lives are imbued with security and good discipline.

In the kindergarten, we are guided by daily, weekly, and seasonal activities which provide this essential opportunity for the child. For example, a rhythmical routine might begin each morning with a circle of songs and movement. This is followed by a time for creative play during which the teacher and assistant are engaged in a daily/weekly activity such as painting on Mondays, or baking on Wednesdays. This is followed by tidying up, hand washing, snack time, going outdoors, and finally, coming together for a story. Great attention is given to celebration of autumn, winter, spring and summer in the kindergarten, not only through festivals but also during times of transition. Children long for a rhythmical way of life which deeply nourishes their play and learning.

When a child's rhythm in the kindergarten can also be supported at home with a nurturing rhythm, such as mealtime and bedtime routines, his/her early childhood will be a rich and harmonious one.

SLEEP

The quality of a child's sleep life has a deep impact on their waking day. A good rule of thumb is that a kindergarten-aged child generally requires 10-12 hours of sleep in order to be fully rested for the activities of the following morning. Regular bedtimes surrounded by calming evening rituals are an important habit to establish for the young child. Your teacher will be happy to discuss bedtime routines with you if you have any questions.



SNACK

Snack time is an important part of our morning and we provide wholesome, mostly organic ingredients. Snacks are arranged in a weekly rhythm and they include whole grains, home-baked bread, vegetables, fruit, some dairy, and herb tea. They are prepared each morning. A snack cannot replace a nourishing, unhurried breakfast at home before arriving at the kindergarten. If you have any questions regarding nutrition and your child, please do not hesitate to ask your teacher.

SNOW DAYS

Mountain Oak School closes or delays opening during inclement weather, in alignment to Prescott Unified School District's (PUSD) determination of safe driving conditions. Therefore, all Mountain Oak families should note radio announcements concerning Prescott Unified School District's school delays or closings and apply that determination to the Mountain Oak School. Depending on weather conditions or other emergency situations, the school will decide on one of the following plans:

Plan 1: CLOSE SCHOOL FOR THE ENTIRE DAY - students and school employees will stay at home and not attend school.

Plan 2: DECLARE A 2-HOUR SHORTENED DAY (delay) SPECIAL SCHEDULE - all schedules will begin 2 hours later. Regular classes will begin two hours later than usual; Dismissal of school in the afternoon will be at the regular time. Kindergarten will be held and will begin promptly at 10:15 a.m. **PLEASE NO EARLY DROP OFF ON 2-HOUR DELAY DAYS.**

NOTE: In the unlikely event of a district-wide early release due to inclement weather, parents are encouraged to pick up their child from school immediately. Do listen to the local TV and radio stations for school closing or the Shortened Day schedule announcement.

KNOT-99.5 FM KNAU-89.3 or 91.7 FM

KONA-1130 AM KOLT-107.5 FM



Remember to dress your children appropriately for the weather and instruct your children to be especially careful when walking because of the increased

danger of slippery roads. DO NOT bring your children to school EARLY on the Shortened Day Schedule. Schools are concerned about the safety of all and unnecessary loss of school time. Decisions to close or not to close school are made very early in the morning, before daylight. Be assured any decision to close or delay school is carefully considered and made only after evaluation of all available up-to-date information and reports. Your cooperation with these plans will be greatly appreciated.

TOYS

A child thrives in an environment of simplicity and beauty and absorbs the impressions around him. Conscious care to his playthings in the first six or seven years of life provides a rewarding experience for the child and parents. We foster a child's imagination by choosing toys that do not limit his ability to play freely. Toys nourish a child just as food does. A few simple, natural playthings will help enliven the child's creative play.

Please encourage your child to keep his toys, books, and other playthings at home, as bringing them to school can cause awkward situations among the children. Also, gum, candy, watches, and jewelry of any kind should not be brought to school. Please do not be alarmed if you find crystals, buttons, seashells, gnomes, crayons, etc. in your child's pockets when he/she comes home. Simply have your child return them to the kindergarten the next day.



Signature Page

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this material. We hope that it has been informative and helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns. We are looking forward to getting to know you and your child and having a year full of wonder!

I/We have read this handbook and agree to support the information contained in it.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Child's Name

Please sign and return this page to your teacher by Monday, August 24, 2009.

Thank You.

