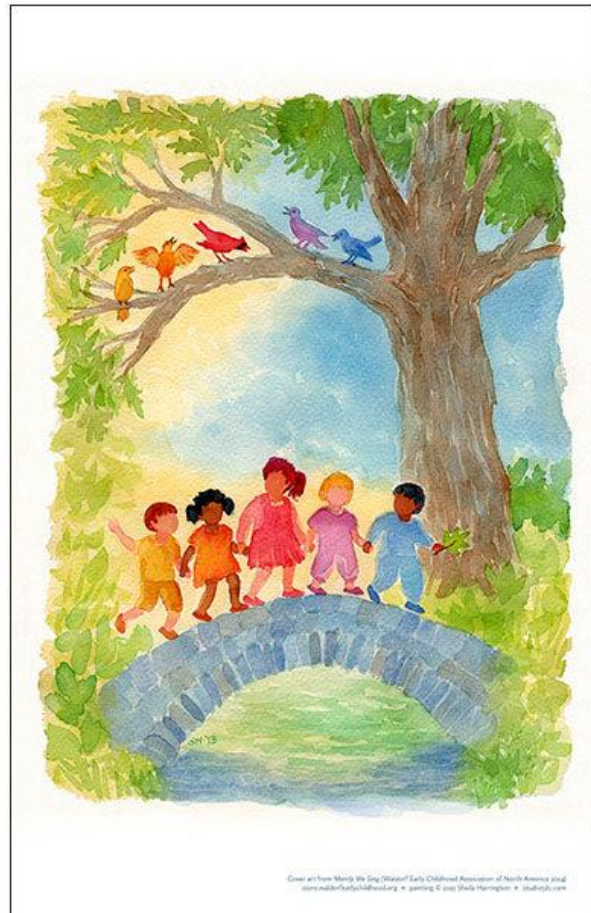




# Preschool Parent Handbook



*Revised August 2022*

# Welcome

We strive to provide a safe, warm, and nurturing environment to foster your child's development, working together with children, parents and teachers. This handbook is a summary of information about our school and unique aspects of our Waldorf Preschool program. Should you have questions or concerns regarding your child and their day-to-day life at school, please speak to your child's lead teacher.

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Full article: [What Children Need, The Essentials of Waldorf Early Childhood](#) by Susan Howard

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## Part I: Practical Items

### 1) Hours of Operation-Pick-Up and Drop-off Time

Pick-ups and drop-offs are outdoors. If for some reason you are late picking up your child, please notify the reception desk by calling our main number – 905-331-4387 or emailing:

[reception@haltonwaldorf.com](mailto:reception@haltonwaldorf.com). Please be sure to **connect with one of the teachers at both drop-off and pick-up** ensuring the teachers are aware of each child's arrival and departure.

#### Daily Schedule

8:00	Supervision begins for early drop off in the playground (no fee for this service)
8:30	the school day starts
12:00	<b>Half Day</b> pick up
12:30	Lunch
3:25	<b>Full Day</b> pick up
3:30 –6:00	After care program (additional fees apply)

### 2) Positive Relationships-Child Guidance & Discipline

It is important for a child's social and emotional development to build positive relationships with caring and trusting adults. Waldorf discipline is a process not an instant act. Here is an [article](#) that may be helpful in your research, noting that the article gives some examples, your teachers will have their own unique ways of working with the children and discipline. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask your teacher.

*“The young child instinctively expects guidance. Without the certainty of his parents and teachers, he loses his security... Constantly being asked what he wants creates bewilderment in his mind... Instead, we must develop consciousness and consciously meet the child's paramount needs. They are easily stated: security and an awareness of growth, love, and a certain amount of protection ... The conscientious and conscious parent will have to play an active and positive role in the education, the leading forth of his child ... Lead the child by conveying firmness permeated with love.”* (Margret Meyerkort, internationally respected Preschool educator).

### 3) Food

**All food: snacks and lunches are provided by the school each day.** Healthy snacks are prepared and served during our morning and afternoon programs. [Real Food for Real Kids](#) serves all our full-day early childhood children a wholesome catered lunch each day. These lunches include well-balanced, nutritional, homemade, local foods, which can be fan favorites to even the most discerning children. We take pride in maintaining and being a waste conscience and environmentally friendly school.

In addition, Real Food for Real Kids catered lunches will:

- introduce new and fun foods to your child's repertoire
- promote healthy nutrition habits and change the way children eat and understand food
- reduce the stress of preparing lunch each day
- save on washing lunch containers
- support Ontario growers, farmers, merchants, and businesses

No food from home is required. Please pack a water bottle for your child.

### 4) Health – screening procedures and COVID-19 policies can be found [here](#).

Fostering your child's health and well-being is important to us. Children who are ill are required to stay at home. In the case of fever, which can be lower in the morning and rise later in the day, a 24-hour period of normal temperature assures that the fever has passed. Coughs and colds run through the class very easily. As a matter of courtesy and respect, please let the teacher know of any contagious illnesses.

**Please notify the school of all absenteeism by emailing [reception@haltonwaldorf.com](mailto:reception@haltonwaldorf.com) or calling 905-331-4387.**

Please notify the school and your teacher of **ALL ALLERGIES**.

### 5) Communication at the school

Halton Waldorf School has created many ways to learn about the school community they include:

- The [Website](#) as well as our social media – Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
- [Online Calendar](#)
- Weekly Parent e-Newsletters
- Annual General Meeting and March Meet and Mingle
- Parent Evenings
- Parent Teacher Conferences

More detailed information can be found in the school's [Grades 1-8 Parent Handbook](#).

#### **Communication with Teachers**

At the beginning of the school year your child's teacher will inform you of when and where they can be reached. In addition to the class meetings held three times per year, teachers provide written communications via e-mail to inform parents of what is happening in the classroom. The teacher will be in touch to arrange a home visit for new students in August.

Any concerns that require longer conversations should be addressed in pre-arranged meetings. Long conversations are not possible when the teachers are with children.

#### **Parent Questions and Concerns**

We value healthy communication in all aspects of the school's life that model a civil society and learning community for our students. It is natural for concerns to arise within any school system, and we ask that

such concerns be communicated directly in a productive and constructive manner. Please refer to the [Grades 1-8 Parent Handbook](#) for further details.

## 6) Parent Meetings

Parent meetings are held once per term. These meetings may take place in person outside when weather permits, and your teacher will advise you with details via email communication. They are for adults only. Nursing infants are welcome. It is important that at least one parent per family is represented at these meetings so that you are fully informed about class activities and developments. Parent meetings will include opportunities for you to learn together about your children, a chance to participate in activities that will deepen your understanding of the young child's development and an opportunity to build your class community, strengthen relationships with each other and the teacher. In the spring, there will be a meeting devoted to grade one readiness. All early childhood parents are very welcome to come and learn why it is important in Waldorf education that a child is ready in every way for stepping into the next phase of learning in the grades program. Please speak with your child's teacher if you have any topics that you would like us to explore at parent meetings. We strive together with you to make these meetings meaningful.

## 7) Class Parent Representatives

Each class at the Halton Waldorf School has "class reps" and are members of the Parent Association (PA). Class reps are there to help the class teacher with practical items such as school trips as well as help other parents in the class with questions that they may have about school activities. They also play a big part in organizing parents' tasks in school fairs (which happen twice per year). Class parents will share information and 'action items' from the Parent Association meetings. Class parents can also take initiative, in counsel with the teacher and PA, to fund-raise for special expenses that may come up in a class.

## 8) Building a Relationship between Home and School

As Waldorf teachers, we aim to create a safe and healthy environment for your child to develop and grow. We have planned a healthy rhythm for the young child, and through years of experience, we know how important your support at home is for your child to be successful at school. Parents can support their child's Preschool experience in the following ways:

- Spending more time in nature as much as possible and reducing exposure to TV, video viewing and computer activities. During your interview we will have an opportunity to share views on technology and its affects on the young child. We suggest some research on this topic; if you are looking for more resources you will find some listed in the recommended reading section at the end of the handbook. The best way to see how technology affects your child is to observe them: when they have been exposed to it and when they are not exposed to it. How does it change the way they engage with the world around them? ([An article to get you started](#)) See more articles and resources in the recommended reading section below.
- A well-rested child will be content in the rhythm of the day. As you will determine the best bedtime for your child, it may be earlier for those who need an early start for school the next morning. You will find that your well-rested child wakes up on their own in the morning, ready and willing to meet the day. To ensure your child is getting enough sleep and is well rested, preparation for bedtime between 7 and 8 p.m. is helpful. [Click here for more information about sleep and the young child](#))
- Rest time is a vital part of the daily rhythm in a Waldorf Preschool classroom. When young children can have a short rest and process the many social interactions and busy activities from

the morning, the opportunity to have some alone time, be quiet by themselves for a short period, laying down and if possibly letting go for sleep, can be refreshing for them in the afternoon. If your child rests in the afternoon at home too, they know that a rest is as honoured at home as it is at school.

- Encouraging the family to sit together at mealtimes can support your child to sit with their friends at school and share a meal together.
- Involve your children in simple daily household chores.
- It is beneficial to consider rhythm between activity and rest during the day and be sure to include both aspects in your child's day. Bring rhythm into the home life - active time, quiet or focused time, active time, quiet or focused time and so on throughout the day. You will find the day goes much smoother for you as well.
- Being on time for drop-off and pick-up
  - **Drop-off:** Children often arrive and enter play together very early on in the morning; it can be difficult for a child who comes late to enter the play once it has started. Arriving on time allows your child to engage and to experience the healthy benefits of the rhythm and activities in the Preschool.
  - **Pick-up:** Some children may have difficulties with leaving at the end of a wonderful day at school. Remind them they will be back soon and now it is time to go. Remember it is a wonderful sign that they love to be at school.
- Please feel free to contact your child's teacher as soon as a concern or question arises. Each teacher will provide a time when they are usually available.
- It is beneficial to attend all parent meetings – this is one way to strengthen your partnership with your child's teacher and your community.
- Familiarize yourself with Waldorf education through reading, participating in learning opportunities at the school and beyond. Keep an eye on the newsletter to learn about upcoming learning opportunities and see the recommended reading section and links in the handbook.
  - [WECAN | Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America](#)

## 9) How We Work with Separation Anxiety

Children are naturally attached to their parents and families. Experiencing a new environment with new people caring for them, children will experience separation anxiety, tears or even have tantrums. At this time, our patience and loving care will help to ease the transition.

During drop-off, this anxiety can be heightened. One of the most important aspects that will support your child through this transition is your confidence in the teacher, the environment, and the school. It is important for your child that you can pass the child to the teacher in trust, and with the knowledge that you will be contacted if the child is not coping well. The tears will eventually subside over a period and the child will realign themselves with their new surroundings. As teachers, we practice gentleness using songs and surround them with loving warmth to reassure them until the unrest passes.

For parents, separation anxiety looks and feels traumatic. We assure you when you are confident, your child will be confident and that this time of transition will ease gradually as your child builds resilience and adaptability. The care we provide to the children is grounded in love and respect for what your child is experiencing.

**Parents are to drop off the children at the outdoor entrance to the Preschool playgrounds**

## 10) The Importance of Warmth

The early childhood children will be outdoors for most of their time at school, as it is the ideal, health-giving place for them to be. Working together, we will be extra diligent about how the children are dressed. A warm child is free to grow and take part in the day.

*“Warmth is probably one of the greatest gifts we can give our children. Not only the warmth of our love but also keeping their physical bodies warm. Children are developing their bodies especially during the first 7 years of their lives. An infant and a young child will always feel warm unless they are on the verge of hypothermia because they have an accelerated metabolic rate. If we don't provide them with the layers of cotton, silk, and wool to insulate their bodies, then they must use some of their potential "growth" energy to heat their bodies. This same energy would be better utilized to further develop their brains, hearts, livers, lungs etc. In addition, being cold decreases immunity. We are all more susceptible to the germs and viruses that are always around us when we are wet and cold. When our body has to expend extra energy to keep warm then less energy is available to "fight" off infections. (Full article by Dr. Susan Johnson can be found here: <http://www.youandyourchildshealth.org/articles/warmth.html>)*

When we are outside, the ideal is that your child is warm enough, able to move freely, dry, protected from the sun and clean enough to go inside later. We can change their clothes, if necessary, be sure to ensure there are spare clothes in the cloth bags the children will keep at school.

## 11) Clothing Your Young Child at School

As noted above, it is crucial that the children are dressed for any weather. We will begin our day outside everyday and only extreme weather stops us, such as high winds, extreme cold and thunderstorms. The children need to have waterproof jackets and pants, rubber boots, closed shoes, long pants and long sleeves (in warmer weather this provides protection from mosquitoes). **Hats must be always worn outdoors.**

When colder weather comes, the children need snowsuits and mittens. Wool hats, mittens and socks are the best for warmth and allow for moisture transference in a way that synthetics do not. Undershirts and wool sweaters or vests can be layered and removed if necessary – dressing in layers helps accommodate for fluctuating temperatures. **We highly recommend at least 3 layers on the top and two layers on the bottom once the temperatures begin to drop in the fall and until the warmth has penetrated the ground in the spring (young children spend a great deal of time on the ground).** The warmth of the body of a young child is very important for the development of their organs. We have extra clothes at school if the weather changes dramatically through the day.

Dressing your **child in clothing without cartoons, slogans or writing** during school time, frees them of the influences of external media during their day. This allows your child, as well as other children, the opportunity to develop their own imagination using creative ideas and thoughts as the source of inspiration for their play.

## 12) What to Bring

*Please remember that all items used for school including clothing, shoes, backpacks etc. are to be free of game or media inspired characters, cartoons, slogans, or writing. All clothing needs to be suitable for free movement during play and circle games.*

- **Hat every day**, suitable to the season. We ask that your child always has a hat on outside. We usually have extra hats; however, most children prefer their own.
- **Extra clothing is kept in a spare bag in the classroom** – include two pairs of socks, one pair of underwear, one pair of pants, one long sleeve shirt, one sweater.
- **Fair weather splash pants** - we ask that the children always wear splash pants to protect their clothing and the carpets inside. We try to keep the dew, mud, and sand in the yard! Please be sure to have a very thin pair of splash pants for fair, warm weather. In very warm weather we make exceptions.
- **Rain suit** - a one-piece rain suit is the best, but raincoats and pants are great too – see clothing resources below.
- **Indoor shoes** - the children will need clean shoes or slippers that fit securely with good support. We request that shoes have no lights or noises, which cause distraction.
- **Boots to start every day** – rubber boots unlined in the warm weather and lined for when the weather turns colder, and it is still wet. Even in fine weather most days start with wet grass from the dew and wet shoes stay wet all day. You may keep outdoor shoes in the cloakroom for later if the day is fine and the dew is gone.
- **Winter Boots** - check to see that the boot is rated for -30 or -40 C. Be sure there is a removable liner and check them regularly to see that they are dry – boots that do not have a removable liner are impossible to dry before it's time to go outside again!
- **Snow suit** – one-piece snow suits or two-piece with overall style pants to ensure that no snow goes in between
- **Long underwear** - wool is the very best. For the sensitive child, silk wool blend is ideal. The children spend a lot of time on the ground and on the floor at school. Keeping them warm and comfortable is important.
- **Scarves** - in colder weather, a scarf, neck warmer or balaclava is necessary for everyone
- **Sun protection** - the number one protection from the sun is clothing (hats and long sleeves). Sunblock is our second choice. Please apply sunblock before school if you feel it is needed in the morning.
- **The following are companies that carry good quality, long lasting outdoor clothing, outerwear and boots for children:**
  - Mountain Equipment Co-op for seasonal outdoor gear
  - Sail – for seasonal outdoor gear
  - Warmth and Weather – for organic woollens and wool/silk as well as ethical rainwear (also sold through school fundraisers)
  - Puddlegear for rain wear

### 13) What Not to Bring

We request your help in choosing clothing for school that does not display media characters and slogans. Commercial nature of mass media characters can inhibit the development of a healthy imagination and play. We strive to create an environment where the child can express and play out of his or her own experience.

- **Children's toys and personal items** should be kept at home. Items from home are very distracting and create challenges with sharing. We have plenty of materials in the classrooms. If they do make it to school, the teacher will store the items until going home time.
- We further request that children do not wear **nail polish, hair dyes or 'tattoos'**. These are a form of adornment suited to an older stage of life and distract the child and their friends from finding their own imaginative and creative play. It becomes the focus of their time together.





## **Part II**

### **Essential aspects of Waldorf early childhood and how they are working in our classrooms with your children.**

#### **14) Love and Warmth**

*“Children who live in an atmosphere of love and warmth, and who have around them truly good examples to imitate, are living in their proper element.” —Rudolf Steiner, The Education of the Child*

Our teachers strive to provide an environment of love and emotional warmth, which in turn creates the basis for the child’s healthy development. These qualities are striven for between the teacher and the child, in the children’s behaviour toward one another, and among the adults in the school.

We also feel that the children are served if this love and warmth exist in the relationships between the teachers and the parents, between the early childhood teachers and the rest of the school, and in the surrounding community.

#### **15) The Classroom Environment and Nourishing the Senses**

The Waldorf classroom environment is a warm and supportive place where the child feels secure in the feeling that they are loved. Physically it is simple, beautiful, and harmonious to the eye so as not to over stimulate the child and to encourage their creativity and imagination.

Learning in the early years is profoundly connected to the child’s physical and sensory experience, therefore the physical surroundings of our classrooms, indoors and out, have been created to provide a nourishing environment and diverse opportunities for a child’s active self-education. By integrating diverse elements and bringing them into meaningful, understandable, and harmonious order, the teachers provide an environment that is accessible to the young child’s understanding, feelings, and

active will. These surroundings provide the basis for the development of a sense of coherence for the young child. The child unconsciously experiences the love, care, and intentions that are expressed through the outer furnishings and materials of the classroom. (The Child at Work and Play)

## **16) Creative and Artistic Experiences and Rhythm**

In our early childhood classrooms, the art of education is the art of living. The teacher is an artist in how they perceive and relate to the children and how they relate to the activities of daily life. The teacher orchestrates and choreographs the rhythms of each day, each week, and each season in such a way that the children can breathe freely in a living structure.

Young children respond strongly to rhythm and are tremendously supported when they have rhythm every day. Therefore, the daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly rhythms are so strong in Waldorf early childhood classrooms. “When there is rhythm, life can actually begin to become freer. Children are more relaxed, more secure, less anxious, and stress-filled, because they know that the adult, they trust is guiding the flow of the day. Young children relax into this security and are often less clingy and demanding,” Susan Weber of Sophia’s Hearth article on rhythm. It also takes time to find rhythm. Give it time; it can take up to 40 days for a rhythm to settle into our lives, especially if rhythm is new to you and your child. As your child settles into the rhythm of their class, please be aware that your child will be tired at the beginning of the school year, playing and being social all day is tiring for anyone.

Within the Preschool daily rhythm, there is provision for free play and for group activity. At free play time the child may choose to involve themselves with a group of others or play alone in the variety of centres within the room. There are many natural materials available like wool, shells, rocks, pinecones, and driftwood, as well as handmade toys that leave much to the child’s imagination, calling forth the child’s natural creativity. At this time of the day the child may also decide to join one of the many tasks in which the teacher is involved, such as watering the plants, sewing, dusting, preparing the table for snack, sweeping, digging, finger-knitting, gardening, mixing and kneading the dough for bread, and chopping vegetables for soup, to name a few. Snack time, circle time, story time or puppet shows are examples of group activities where the whole class participates. The day is set up to move between times of free play and times of group or formed activity. This is called “the in and out breathing” of each day. When the day is structured this way, it supports healthy breathing in the child, creating a health-giving education.

In addition, the teacher offers the children opportunities for artistic experiences in singing and music, in movement and gesture through rhythmic games, and in creative speech and language through verses, poetry, and stories. The children may model with beeswax, draw, and do watercolor painting. Puppet shows put on by the teacher are an important element in the life of the Preschool and Kindergarten.

## **17) Imitation and the Young Child**

The teacher is aware that imitation is one of the child’s main learning tools at this age and the teacher takes care to be worthy of imitation. Each action, if done with quiet and loving reverence, will be imitated by the child so that the qualities of wonder and reverence will grow within them, feeding those soul qualities that are so important – reverence towards all living things, respect, consideration, and tolerance towards our fellow human beings. To read more about imitation see the following article from Susan Weber.

## **18) Free Imaginative Play, Inside and Out:**

Little children learn through play. They approach play in an entirely individual way out of their own unique configuration of soul and spirit, and out of their unique experiences of the world in which they live. The way a child plays may offer a picture of how he will take up his destiny as an adult.

The Preschool teachers create an environment that supports the possibility of healthy play. This environment includes the physical surroundings, furnishings, and play materials; the social environment of activities and social interactions; and the inner life of thoughts, intentions, and imaginations held by the teachers.

**Outdoor Play:** The emphasis on outdoor play is an integral part of the Waldorf Preschool curriculum. Its benefits for the young child are wide reaching, from supporting physical health to connecting with our natural surroundings.

The children start their day outside playing on the climbing structures, digging in the sandbox, swinging high into the air, or helping their teachers with a task such as raking leaves, shovelling snow or gardening in the spring and fall. We are fortunate to have several community paths through the forest and we may "take the scenic route" to enter the school by walking through the forest. There are many things to see along the path, a whiskey frisky, a mushroom, and many other treasures.

Nature walks give the children a chance to experience seasonal changes as well; the new buds of spring are always noticed as well as the changes of the leaves and the first frosty puddle. Some days the children will hike to the pond to visit the ducks and watch sticks float away from shore. On other days, the children emerge from the forest at Stoney Park. Two large rocks challenge the children's will as they work hard to get to the top. They are often perplexed as to why their teachers don't just lift them onto the rock, but nothing can replace the sense of accomplishment after climbing up all by themselves.

Daily outdoor play, in all sorts of weather, allows the children to develop their senses of balance, movement, touch and well being. It gives opportunity to come into relationship with themselves, their peers, and the world around them. Our time outside is as good for the body as it is for the soul.

## **19) Protection of the Forces of Childhood**

The lively, awake yet dreamy way of the little child's consciousness is encouraged to thrive in the early childhood classrooms. This means that the teacher works to avoid a lot of verbal instruction. Instead, their gestures and actions provide a model for the child to imitate. Each day is filled with familiar daily rhythms and activities which provide a context where the need for verbal instruction is greatly reduced and simple, imagery in stories, songs, and games provides experiences that the children can internalize but that do not require intellectual or critical reflection or explanation. ([for more on this subject click here](#)) or ([Non-Verbal Education](#))

## **20) Gratitude Reverence and Wonder**

*"Gratitude grows naturally in children through witnessing the gratitude the adults feel as they receive what is freely given by others, and in how they express this gratitude. If a child says "thank you" very naturally—not in response to the urging of others, but simply through imitating— something has been done that will greatly benefit the child's whole life. Out of this an all-embracing gratitude will develop toward the whole world. This cultivation of gratitude is of paramount importance." —Rudolf Steiner, The Child's Changing Consciousness*

*“Out of experiences of gratitude, the first tender capacity for love, which is deeply embedded in each and every child, begins to sprout in earthly life. If, during this first period of life, we strive to create an atmosphere of gratitude around the children, then out of this gratitude toward our everyday world, toward the greater universe, and also out of thankfulness for being able to be a part of this world, a profound and warm sense of devotion will arise . . . upright, honest, and true.”* —Rudolf Steiner, *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*

Throughout each day, in our classrooms, a sense of gratitude, reverence and wonder is fostered with the children, and this is the basis for what will become a capacity for deep love and commitment in later life, for dedication and loyalty, for true admiration of others, for fervent spiritual devotion, and for placing oneself wholeheartedly in the service of the world.

[Read more about how gratitude, reverence, and wonder work in Waldorf education](#)

## **21) Joy, Humour and Happiness**

The teacher’s earnestness about their work and their serious striving is balanced with humour and a demeanour that bespeaks happiness. There are moments of humour and delight in the classroom every day, even when the days are difficult!

## **22) Adult Caregivers on a Path of Inner Development**

Waldorf educators recognize that their thoughts, attitudes, and imaginations are as real and as much alive in the adult who cares for the children as their actions. The invisible realm that lies behind the outer actions of the teacher has a profound influence on the child’s development. This is true for parents as well as teachers.

Teachers see the child as a threefold being—of body, soul, and spirit. This recognition provides a foundation for the daily activities in the classroom, and for the relationship between adult and child. This is a realm that is largely hidden, and difficult to observe directly. Yet ultimately this realm may affect the development of the children most profoundly. It is not merely our outer activity that influence the growing child. What lies behind and is expressed through this outer activity is also crucial. Ultimately, the most profound influence on the child is who we are as human beings—and who we are becoming and how.



## Part III: Preschool Policies and Procedures

### 1. Preschool Program Statement

This Program Statement is provided to current and prospective parents of children in the HWS Preschool Class. It describes the goals and approaches used in our Childcare program.

This statement is provided in compliance with Ontario Regulation 137/15 reflecting requirements of the Child Care Early Years Act. It is based upon the document: How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's pedagogy for the Early Years which is to be used to guide licensed early years programs. How Does Learning Happen? <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/howlearninghappens.pdf>

Children are capable, creative beings who learn best through play. Play is the work of the child, and a play-based environment allows children to grow their imaginations and learn at their own pace. The task of Halton Waldorf School is to enable students to meet an ever-changing world with knowledge, clarity of thought, creativity, compassion, and responsibility. The curriculum in its content and sequence meets the physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of the developing child and fosters reverence and respect for the earth and all people. Integration of the arts and practical activities enables students to be fully engaged and to develop their unique capacities.

Our educators are thoughtful reflective learners who continually work to develop their practice. We take our responsibilities seriously, including the trust that you have given us to care for your child and our continual striving to keep the child at the center of our practice. Faculty, board, and parents work together in support of the educational task and the social mission of the school. Students, faculty, staff, and parents contribute and learn through community activities, service, and dialogue, within our school, and in the Halton and Waldorf communities.

We offer and support a wide range of opportunities to deepen the understanding of Waldorf education and its underlying principles. We aim to create a healthy, beautiful, and sustainable environment which supports the pedagogical mission of the school.

We work with the Ministry of Education's learning foundations of belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression allow children to grow with security to the fullest of their potential. Through our interactions with others, we strive to build acceptance, learn to take care of others, and experience community. Love and emotional warmth create the basis for a child's healthy development. These qualities should live between the adult caregiver and the child, in the children's behaviour toward one another, and among the adults and families at the school.

The warmth and intention that we bring to our interactions with children allow them to feel safe and valued. The environment that we build, both inside and outside our classrooms, is designed to allow children to experience a feeling of wonder and reverence for the world around them. Our programs have a focus on storytelling and circle time to support communications to lay the foundations of literacy, while our play environments are open ended to allow children to explore materials with an open imagination to develop creativity and problem solving. This is supported through proper nutrition, the practice of healthy habits, active outside time, and adequate rest.

Children learn through imitation. Meaningful work and chores are part of our day. We provide rich opportunities for the children to explore the social and natural worlds through self-initiated free play. We also understand that a strong rhythm and routine helps children to feel secure and calm. Through this state of security and calmness, the quality of the children's play will be richer. Teachers are often busy throughout the day sweeping, washing, and gardening. The children are welcomed to take part in these activities. When they take part in all aspects of daily life, children can achieve a sense

of satisfaction and purpose. Our program includes a consistent and predictable rhythm filled with song and activities that bring joy and goodness to the children's day.

The children's social, cognitive, and physical development is fostered in our program through creative arts, storytelling, cooperative activities, and free play. Each day also includes outdoor time where children can play and work outside. We believe that children learn best in their early years when they are active and engaged in healthy movement.

Seasonal festivals are a highlight in our program for children and they are involved in the preparation of these special times. These festivals also serve to bring families and the community together so that meaningful relationships with faculty, parents, children, and community are fostered.

Our teachers recognize that they play an important role in the class by creating a calm and secure environment. They understand that in this atmosphere, children can best discover the world around them and gradually find their place within it.

Teachers in a Waldorf environment are challenged to engage in a constant process of renewal. Teachers actively observe the children in their care and seek to work consciously and artistically to create the experiences that will serve their development. The teacher's devotion to this task awakens them to the importance of self-education and transformation in the context of community. Their ongoing study of child and human development and artistic and meditative practices become essential elements for the practice of Waldorf early childhood teachers.

Halton Waldorf School is a non-sectarian school that supports cultural, social, economic, religious, and ethnic diversity. The study of anthroposophy is the foundation of the pedagogical work and an integral part of the school's identity. Our teachers work toward providing experiences that are essential for healthy early childhood education. They include:

- Love and warmth
- Creative, artistic experience
- Free, imaginative play
- Joy and humour
- Adult caregivers on a path of inner development
- Care for the environment and healthy nourishment for the senses and body
- Meaningful adult activity as an example for the child's imitation
- Gratitude, reverence, and wonder

In our individual work and as an organization we strive for ongoing observation, research, self-development, and renewal. The well-being of the students and the social and financial health of the school are the basis of our decisions.

### **Holistic View of the Child:**

The HWS Preschool class carries a view of the whole child, mind, body, and spirit. This holistic perspective can be considered from various angles. In this document, we will use the following sections:

#### **a. Promote the health, safety, nutrition, and well-being of the children**

Goal: HWS is aware that the early years set the foundation for the health and wellbeing of children. We understand that the first step in establishing and nurturing health, safety, and wellbeing for the children in our programs is through the connections they make with the teachers.

Approach: The teachers at HWS recognize that children and their families will benefit most when the approach includes involvement and support from everyone who plays an important role in early childhood education at HWS. Settings that promote the wellbeing of children include a focus on basic practices such as supervising children adequately, ensuring the safety of equipment and the environment, good hygiene, and safe sleep procedures, managing illness and injuries effectively and meeting children's nutritional needs. They also allow flexibility to respond to individual needs. To foster health supporting behaviours in HWS, we need to support the development in early childhood which includes a healthy social and physical environment, decision-making processes, procedures, and policies and should also promote health and well-being and prevent injury. It will shape a respectful, welcoming, and caring environment for the children and those providing their care.

Early childhood teachers will work to create an environment that promotes healthy eating by:

- Serving a variety of healthy food choices
- Providing adequate time and space to eat
- Respecting children's appetites and enabling them to eat the amount that is right for them.
- Providing appropriate supervision while children eat meals and snacks.
- Assuring that lunch and snacks are eaten in a calm, positive atmosphere.

**b. Support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, childcare providers, and staff**

Goal: HWS strives to promote a sense of belonging for children and their families by creating positive interactions and collaboration. We understand that relationships of trust are the basis for learning and cooperation. Every child is entitled to be given the opportunity to develop personal responsibility and social skills, and to learn how to problem-solve. HWS is committed to working collaboratively with everyone on the mutual goal of providing the best possible childcare service to families.

Approach: HWS provides a positive learning environment for the children. A sense of belonging will grow in the children as they develop a secure relationship with their teachers.

Children develop a sense of belonging by interacting with their peers in a positive manner through self-directed play and engaging activities. This is noticeable when observing the interactions between the children, their families, and our teachers. This sense of belonging develops and strengthens over the course of time at HWS.

**c. Encourage the children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate**

Goal: At HWS our inclusive programming leads to giving the children a sense of belonging. Positive learning environments and experiences, focused on active play-based learning, encourage communication, self-expression, and self-regulation within each child.

Approach: Our programs focus on active play-based learning as the way that children naturally learn best. It is their natural response to the environment around them. When children are manipulating objects, acting out roles, or experimenting with different materials, they are engaged in learning through play. Play allows them to actively construct, challenge, and expand their own understandings through making connections to prior experiences, thereby opening the door to new learning. Intentional play-based learning enables children to investigate, ask questions, solve problems, and engage in critical thinking. Our program supports children's self-regulation, their ability to deal with stress and remain calm, alert,

and ready to learn. When children are calmly focused and alert, they are best able to modulate their emotions, ignore distractions, inhibit their impulses, and understand the consequences of their actions. We are continually learning about how to create learning environments and programming that helps support children's self-regulation—to help children remain or return to a state of calm.

**d. Foster the children's exploration, play and enquiry**

Goal: At HWS, children can experience a variety of safe, age appropriate and interesting environments that nurture their healthy growth and development. HWS fosters emerging independence, self-confidence, and skill development in the children

Approach: At HWS play and exploration are at the core of early learning. The environment is where learning is fostered and takes place. HWS believes that children learn through play and are given opportunities to explore, test, try and learn. Our teachers understand the developmental stages of children and work tirelessly to ensure every child has a positive experience

**e. Provide child- initiated and adult- supported experiences**

Goal: Play is the work of the child and is essential to healthy development. Child directed play provides the best learning opportunities. When teachers listen and observe, they can develop a deeper understanding of the interests and perspectives of children.

Approach: HWS offers children ample opportunity to direct their play and explore new ideas and expand old ones. The role of adults is to enhance the experiences of children, not to take over or determine the direction of the play. Adults provide emotional support and encouragement.

**f. Plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported**

Goal: Every child is a capable communicator who expresses himself or herself in many ways. The ability to express thoughts, emotions, needs and wants is an essential part of healthy growth and development for children. Children who can express themselves in a variety of ways feel more competent and understood by others,

Approach: Teachers will respond to children's efforts to communicate and understand and support the needs of the child. Challenging behaviour is often an expression of difficult feelings and/or unmet needs. The teachers will seek to understand more deeply what children are expressing and help them to verbalize their feelings and meet their needs

**g. Incorporate indoor and outdoor play, as well as active play, rest, and quiet time, into the day, and consider the individual needs of the children receiving childcare**

Goal: At HWS we believe every child is an active and engaged learner who explores the world with body, mind, and senses. We create a supportive environment which promotes daily physical activity.

Approach: Along with daily indoor activities, the children will spend a minimum of one hour outside. We believe that it is crucial that children need activity. Children need time to recharge. Each child will be allowed to rest, relax, and/or sleep after lunch.

**h. Foster the engagement and ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children**

Goal: At HWS we strive to keep an open and ongoing communication with all our families.



Approach: At HWS the parents and teachers can communicate face to face daily during the drop-off and pick-up times. This is an opportunity to pass along information about the child's night/day and share any concerns, issues, or questions they may have. It is also a time to share the child's successes and milestones. If a parent or one of the teachers has something they want to discuss that would require more conversation, a phone meeting, or a time for them to meet will be scheduled. Aside from this daily communication, we offer parent/teacher conferences twice a year. This is a time to discuss in more detail the children's progress and development. HWS welcomes feedback and input from parents.

**i. Involve local community partners and allow those partners to support the children, their families, and staff**

Goal: HWS is committed to involving local community partners and to engaging those partners in supporting HWS children, families, and teachers.

Approach: We have many community partners—individuals, organizations and agencies who support HWS children and families financially or through in-kind support. We collaborate with these partners and continue to create more opportunities to expand these relationships on behalf of our children and families.

**j: Support staff, home childcare providers or others who interact with the children at a childcare centre or home childcare May premises in relation to continuous professional learning**

Goals: HWS is committed to hiring, training and fairly compensating all teachers and staff. We hire teachers who have a positive and sensitive attitude towards children. Our non-discriminatory hiring practices provide individuals of all backgrounds the opportunity for employment. We believe that everyone has worth, and everyone is entitled to be respected, supported, and treated fairly.

Approach: Formal professional learning is vital, but we also know that the most central professional growth happens day-to-day, as our teachers co-learn with children and each other as self-reflective professionals. All teachers working with young children have completed studies in Waldorf Teacher Training. Others have completed training in the field of early childhood and are registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators. All program teachers attend annual conferences and receive training on an ongoing basis.

**k: Document and review the impact of the strategies set out in clauses (a) to (j) of subsection 46 (3) on the children and their families.**

Our program focuses on our core values at HWS. We believe that children are important. We feel that children need the opportunity to discover how to interact with others in a safe and nurturing atmosphere as they develop their self-worth, confidence, and communication skills.

Expressing their thoughts, feelings and acceptance of others is encouraged through our programming. Our teaching staff communicate and listen effectively and purposefully with families and fellow educators.

We appreciate and include many different aspects within our program to create a well-rounded, interesting and exciting experience for the children with whom we are privileged to spend our days.

As required by the Ministry of Education's Child Care Early Years Act, this program statement shall be reviewed by all new staff, student teachers, and volunteers prior to interacting with children, annually thereafter, and any time that this statement is modified.

## 2) Admissions

### Admission Process:

#### 1. Submit an application

- Download the application
- Complete and return to Samantha Peris, Admissions Manager, by mail or scan and email [samantha.peris@haltonwaldorf.com](mailto:samantha.peris@haltonwaldorf.com)
- Enclose the application fee (non-refundable)  
\$350 for Preschool (if the child is accepted, \$250 goes towards their tuition fee)

#### 2. Admissions Interview

- Interview between the parents and teacher which may involve your child at the teacher's discretion.
- The Admissions Manager will contact you once your application is received.

#### 3. Sign the Contract

- Upon acceptance by the Faculty, the Finance Office will produce a contract.
- Review of the contract and payment options can be done in person, or over the phone.
- The Tuition Assistance process may be discussed at this point if appropriate.
- Two to three weeks is the normal return deadline for new contracts.

### Discharge Policy:

It is the policy of the Halton Waldorf School to make every effort to serve all the children and their families. We work collaboratively with parents, staff and various community support systems to meet the individual needs of each child.

It is our policy to assist children and parents to make any behaviour changes that are felt by staff, administration and/or outside agencies to be necessary for the health, needs and safety of the child and the other children in the school.

Continual attempts will be made to find appropriate solutions to resolve the problems. Support and guidance through this process will be provided by the Pedagogical Director, Early Childhood Section Chair and EC faculty. Parents are actively involved throughout the process of making decisions.

If a child is experiencing problems that may pose a direct threat to the safety of the other children or staff, the parent/guardian may be required to withdraw the child from the program and make other childcare arrangements.

The following procedure will be followed when a child's behaviour is an issue:

1. The initial interview will be an informal meeting between the parent(s) and teacher. At this meeting, the parent(s) will be informed of the child's social behaviour(s).
2. Support of a medical practitioner or the Therapeutic Support may be requested by the Teacher (Parental consent required).

In most cases, the above steps will be sufficient. If not, the following course of action will be followed:

1. Written notice for a conference to take place with members of the Early Childhood Section Chair, Supervisor and/or Teacher. An action plan will be developed so that all parties are consistent with the strategies that need to be put in place. The type of supports needed will be determined at this time.
2. The parent may be asked to provide 'on call' support or removal of the child from the classroom when safety is questioned. An action plan will be developed to plan for the child to return to the program.
3. Should the child's needs be deemed by the EC faculty or the parent to be beyond the expertise of the staff, recommendation will be made in writing for the parent(s) to withdraw their child and to enroll the child in an alternate facility where his/her needs may be addressed.
4. Whenever possible, the parent/guardian will be given sufficient notice to make alternate arrangements. However, if a child's individual needs or behaviour pose a serious threat to the safety of other children and staff, the parent may be required to immediately withdraw the child from the school at the school's request.

#### **Waiting List:**

Families in the Waiting List will be notified as soon as a spot becomes available by phone or email by the Admissions Manager. They will also be notified of the spot in the list their child is on. Privacy and confidentiality of the children listed on the waiting list will be always maintain.

We are unable to accept fees to hold a spot on our wait list. Fees will be charged once the family has access to a space and has accepted to take the spot.

Parents in the waiting list, whose applications are under consideration, are encouraged to learn more about Waldorf Education and to attend our open house tours on the first Tuesday of each month.

#### **3) Enrolment Fees for Preschool (age 3 – 4):**

- 5 mornings (8:30 -12:00)      \$10,500
- 5 full days (8:30 -3:25 pm)      \$17,600

Additional enrollment Information, dates and times are available on the Halton Waldorf School website: [haltonwaldorf.com/admissions/tuition-information](http://haltonwaldorf.com/admissions/tuition-information)

#### **4) Activities off the Premises:**

Often the children go for a walk through the "forest" behind the property of the school. There are paths made of wood chips that we can follow. One path will lead us to "stone park" (a beautiful open field with two large boulders), and the other path will take us to a bridge where we see a duck pond. The end of the path also takes us back to the school.

Permission forms for our "forest" outings are included in the enrollment package and signed prior to the child's start date.

#### **5) Holidays Observed & School Closures:**

We offer a 37-week schedule. Dates can be seen on the HWS school calendars at this link:

<http://www.haltonwaldorf.com/events/>

- Our program does not operate on the following days: Labour Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas/Winter Break (2 weeks), Family Day, March Break (2 weeks), Good Friday, Easter Monday, and Victoria Day.
- As well, the Preschool room is closed on one day each in October, February, and May (Professional Development Days). Two days in each of October and February is for Parent-Teacher meetings which are important opportunities for dialogue and exchange; classes are not held for children on these days. In October, after the Parent/ Teacher meetings, the following two days are also closed for our midterm Fall Break.
- The specific dates for each of these non-school days are posted on the website calendar at the beginning of each academic year (September). A listing of these dates is distributed to each family at the beginning of the school year.

#### **6) Services Offered:**

Halton Waldorf School (HWS) offers both half and full-day programs in a five-day block for preschool age children.

- The half-day program runs from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm and includes a morning snack each day
- The full-day program runs from 8:30 am to 3:25 pm
- All children may be dropped off for the Before Care Program as early as 8 am; formal programming begins at 8:30 am.
- Full-day children receive a morning snack, a hot lunch, and an afternoon snack after their rest time every day.

#### **7) Administration of Medication:**

Halton Waldorf School administers prescription and non-prescription drugs, in the original container to children when requested by the parent in writing. Prescribed medications will be received and administered to children always ensuring that the medication is in the original container, clearly labelled with the child's name, name of drug, instructions for storage and administration of the drug. Supervisor will dispense medications and will complete and sign the Medication Administration Log noting any observations each time the medication is administered.

#### **8) Fire Safety and Emergency Procedures:**

It is expected that a fire drill will be held each month in your child's Preschool Class. Emergency Procedures are posted in each room, and all staff are trained in what to do in case of an evacuation emergency. Because our fire drills are not announced, and we make a complete evacuation of the building, proper footwear is required to be worn always.

If it is deemed 'unsafe to return' to the school, the evacuation site to proceed would be Orchard Park Elementary School. In the unlikely event that this were to occur, parents would be immediately contacted by phone by your child's teacher, who would provide you with the details of on how to pick up your child. For any emergency situations involving a child with an individualized plan in place, the procedures in the child's individualized plan will be followed.

Staff will ensure that children are kept safe, are accounted for, and are supervised always during an emergency.

#### 9) Supervision Policy for Volunteers and Students:

Volunteers & Students will be supervised by an employee of the Halton Waldorf School always. Direct unsupervised access (when the adult is alone with a child) is not permitted for persons who are not employees of the Halton Waldorf School.

NOTE: Volunteers and placement students may not be counted in the staffing ratio. Staff maintains supervision of children according to standards which includes meeting ratios, always. No child is supervised by a person under 18 years of age.

#### 10) Supervisor Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations

Supervisor or designated staff:

1. Provides consistent supervision, orientation and mentorship to students or volunteers throughout the placement.
2. Ensures the following will be discussed/reviewed and implemented with students/volunteers:
  - An orientation.
  - Review of all the policies and procedures in the preschool binder.
  - Student/volunteer will review the policy and attachments and sign off on the forms annually.
  - Review individual plans for children with anaphylaxis and the emergency procedures before commencement of placement.
  - Criminal reference checks are required and collected for all volunteers having direct contact with children. This criminal reference check policy does not apply to students placed in childcare programs by an educational institution. Note: Criminal reference checks are required and collected by community colleges and universities prior to students beginning a placement in childcare.
  - Discusses roles and responsibilities of the childcare and obtain program expectations from volunteers and students.
  - Ensures that the policy (Child Care Supervision for Volunteers and Students) is reviewed annually with new employees before they begin their employment and annually afterwards.
  - Halton Waldorf School's insurance covers students and volunteers.

#### 11) Prohibited Practices:

- Corporal punishment of the child.
- Physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a highchair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting himself, herself or someone else, and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent.
- Locking the exits of the childcare centre or home childcare premises for the purpose of confining the child or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures.

- Use of harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame, or frighten the child or undermine his or her self-respect, dignity, or self-worth.
- Depriving the child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing, or bedding; or
- Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

#### 12) Student/Volunteers Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations

- Students/ volunteers will be monitored on an ongoing basis by all staff. If there are any concerns, it will be recorded and addressed to the student/ volunteer.
- Students/ volunteers will read and review operator policies and procedures.
- Volunteers will provide up to date criminal reference check prior to commencing work.
- Students will abide by college/university policies regarding student conduct, roles, and responsibilities.
- Students/Volunteers will sign off on all the policies and procedures acknowledging that they have met with the supervisor/designated staff, reviewed, and understand policies.

#### 13) Halton Waldorf School COVID Response Plan

Available at: <https://www.haltonwaldorf.com/policiesandhandbooks>