



Kindergarten Handbook



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Kimberton.org

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Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Kimberton Waldorf School. We hope this handbook will serve as an introduction to the Kindergarten and acquaint you with information and ideas that we feel are important for your child's environment and well-being. Feel free to ask any questions you may have. General information regarding the school can be found on our website, and specific announcements will be included in the school newsletter. In the meantime, please keep this handbook as a reference throughout the year.

The Early Childhood Faculty

The Kindergarten

The Rose Kindertgartens have up to 18 children each, while the Forest Kindergarten has up to 10, ranging in age from four to seven. Each class has a lead teacher and an assistant teacher. Children attend five days a week, although there is a four-day option (Monday – Thursday). Most children attend Full Day Kindergarten, but some opt for the Half Day program as follows:

Half Day Kindergarten refers to the morning hours between 8:00am and 12:10pm. The Half Day includes creative free play, both inside and outside, household and artistic activities, snack, circle and story.

Full Day Kindergarten refers to the morning hours plus the early afternoon hours, (from 12:10pm-3:10pm). The afternoon program is designed to be a counterbalance to the busy morning, much like a well-deserved outbreath after taking in a deep in-breath. The children learn to have a quiet conversation during lunch, and then all will rest quietly, tucked into their blanket, for the 45-minute to one-hour rest period. Many children fall asleep, allowing the good work of the morning to integrate fully into their growing bodies. After rest time, the children transition outside to the play yard and once again delight in the gifts of nature. At 3:10, the Full Day children are picked up in the play yard, and the Aftercare children transition to the Aftercare Program.

Afternoon Rest Time in the Kindergarten

The Kindergarten offers a healthy, balanced day for your young growing child. The mornings are filled with the children's play as well as purposeful activity. The daily rhythm holds both active and expansive play, as well as more inward and quiet listening times. Each day's rhythm alternates between the more active and less active, which creates a healthy ebb and flow, much like breathing. This purposeful rhythm is the basis of a vital learning environment.

When our morning comes to an end and the afternoon begins, the Full Day children transition into the second half of the day. This part of the day is less active and is, on the whole, a restful time. For healthy learning, the children must take time to relax and quiet their bodies, minds, and even their words. A daily afternoon rest time is an essential part to any healthy rhythm.

As the children transition from lunch to rest time, the teacher might sing a soothing transitional lullaby, gently play music on a harp or glockenspiel, offer a warm foot bath or sweet hand rub with lotion or tell a quiet short story to bring a sense of quiet and warmth to the children. Following this transition to rest is the quiet resting time itself.

Depending on the day, many children may fall asleep, either right away or eventually. Although children do not have to sleep during rest time, which lasts for 45 minutes to one hour, they are to be lying down and resting quietly on their own. Activities are not offered during rest time for the purpose of allowing the children to completely rest and be nourished by the morning activities. This is the time when sensory impressions, as well as large and fine motor movements of the morning hours, can be taken into the body to integrate and build the body-brain connections.

Supporting your child at home with regular mealtimes and bedtimes is just as essential for the healthy development of your child in Kindergarten. Studies show that the Kindergarten-age

child requires 11-12 hours of sleep per day to not only maintain energy for the day, but to grow and mature their bodies, organs, and brain during this most crucial developmental time of their life. By getting the appropriate amount of sleep and rest, the young child is able to build a strong foundation for all learning to come.

During rest time, the Afternoon Assistant Teacher rests in the same room with the children.

Please provide the following items for afternoon rest:

- **A blanket. No media images, please.**
- **A small pillow in a pillow case (no bigger than a travel-sized pillow). No media images, please.**
- **A full-sized pillowcase to be used as a stuff bag for the blanket and the pillow.**
- **All resting items should be in soft colors and patterns.**

These items will be sent home periodically for washing.

If your child genuinely needs a cozy companion during rest time, they may have **one small, soft, stuffed** animal, blanket, or doll to be left at school and to be kept with their bedding during the morning. If the cozy companion cannot be left at school due to attachment issues, please talk to the class teacher about making arrangements.

Aftercare refers to the time between 3:10 and 5:30pm. Parents can leave their children in our care for all or part of this time, to be paid for on an hourly basis. Children who stay for Aftercare sign up in advance, but in case of emergencies or if the parent is running late for pick-up, the child may stay in Aftercare, and charges will be post calculated. **Please inform the office if last minute arrangements need to be made.** The Aftercare room is located at the back of the Lower School building, near the back of the kindergarten yard.

Snack in Kindergarten

Children staying for the Half Day program will be served snack at 10:00 and are dismissed at 12:10 before lunchtime.

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 and herbal tea. Snacks may include dairy and eggs. They are prepared each morning. However, a snack cannot replace a nourishing, unhurried breakfast at home before arriving at the Kindergarten. If you have any questions regarding nutrition and diet, please do not hesitate to ask the teachers.

Lunch in Kindergarten

Lunch during the Full Day program may be either purchased from KWS's Food for Thought lunch program, or children may bring their lunch from home. Lunch menus and order forms for Full Day kindergarten students are found on the website and in the office. Parents of those having the Food For Thought lunches are urged to send a lunch from home on any day that they feel necessary to ensure their child is eating the food that they will enjoy and that suits their dietary needs. Parents with children who have allergies to certain foods are asked to send a packed lunch to school every day; for children who are gluten-free, vegan, or vegetarian, Food For Thought offers those options.

Food For Thought Policy on Serving Students or Adults with Serious Reactions to Foods

Food For Thought cannot serve anyone who has a serious reaction to food. Serious reactions include being Celiac, needing an epi-pen after ingesting certain foods, or any life threatening allergy or reaction from food. It is up to the Kitchen Manager's discretion whether someone can be served or not.

Packed Lunch: We ask that parents who pack a lunch **follow the guidelines listed here**:

- Please pack healthy, nutritious foods from each of the three major food groups – protein, fat, and carbohydrate – each day. Food items that are in their natural state are healthiest, while processed food is less healthy.
- Please do not pack desserts or sugary foods such as jello, pop tarts, chocolate (or chocolate trail mix bars), candy, cookies or gum.
- Please do not send any beverages such as milk, soda, juice or smoothies. We will serve water at lunch.
- Please send the packed lunch in a small basket or in a media-free, small lunch pack with an **ice pack and a cloth napkin each day**.
- Please help us reduce the amount of trash and recyclables by sending food in reusable containers.
- Please put your child’s name in big letters on the outside of the lunch basket or lunch pack where it is easy to read.

Warm or heated foods may be sent in a thermos; we will not be able to heat food for lunch.

We will encourage the children to eat the protein segment of their lunch first, and we will also encourage them to bring home any uneaten portion of their lunch.

Examples of Lunch Items would be:

- Protein: Cheese, *nuts, egg, yogurt, meat, legumes, cottage cheese, fish, tofu, sandwiches, stews, soups
- Fats: Avocado, butter, olive oil, vegetable oil, coconut oil
- Carbohydrate: Grains, vegetables, fruit, natural chips, rice or stir fry, quinoa salad, and bread

**We may need to have a NUT-FREE Kindergarten. We will check in with you about that before the start of the school year.*

Arrival and Departure

The Kindergarten morning begins at 8:00am. Beginning the day together with all the other children establishes a good rhythm for your child. Lateness makes it all the more difficult for your child to integrate into play and disrupts more focused activities such as Circle.

The **earliest** that a child can be dropped off is 7:45am. If a child comes to school before 7:45, they **must be accompanied by an adult or older sibling and wait in the kindergarten hallway until 7:45**, when they may enter the classroom. The teachers may have arrived earlier but will be busy in their classroom preparing for the day.

When dropping off your child late, please sign your child in at the office first, and then escort your child to the classroom to be received by a teacher. **When picking up your child early, please sign your child out at the office**, and then pick up your child from the classroom. **Please notify the office each day your child will be absent by 8:45am. To leave an attendance message, please call 610-933-3635 x3.**

The Half Day Kindergarten finishes at 12:10, Full Day at 3:10. For your child's welfare, please be prompt to pick up your child. A parent's lateness can cause unnecessary stress and worry for the child. If you are unavoidably delayed, please notify the office so we can reassure your child and make necessary arrangements. Pick up at 12:10 is in the hall; please come in to the hall to pick up your child where you can greet the teacher. Children will not be sent out to the parking lot or driveway unaccompanied. Parents are asked to **wait quietly** at the end of the hall by the door, or outside in nice weather, until the release.

Pick up for the Full Day program is at 3:10 in the yard behind the kindergarten building. Please tell the staff that you are leaving with your child.

If your child is to be picked up by someone other than yourself,

please let the teacher know by sending a note or notifying the office as early as possible. Please include the following:

- Full name of the person picking up
- Relationship to you/your child
- Date and time of pickup
- Contact number for the person pickup up

Rythm

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, the morning may begin with a daily/weekly activity such as painting and/or washing on Mondays, or baking on Wednesdays, and afterwards there is a time for creative play. This is followed by tidying up, a bathroom routine, a circle of songs and movement, snack time, washing up, going outdoors and finally coming together for a story. Great attention is also given to celebrating autumn, winter, spring and summer in the Kindergarten, not only through festivals, but also during the 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 regular mealtime and bedtime routines), her early childhood will be a rich and harmonious one.

Health

The State of Pennsylvania requires that each child have a completed health and immunization form on file in the school office (the form provides a space for a statement from parents concerning exemption from immunization, if applicable). Also, parents are asked to enter essential information regarding health conditions and allergies, daytime phone numbers, family doctor and health insurance information, etc., via a parent portal directly into the school's database. **It is very important that this information be entered by the first day of school.**

The teachers share with you a deep concern for your child's physical and inner health. The best environment for a sick child is to be resting at home. If a child is overly tired or is not well enough to participate in all Kindergarten activities including going outdoors, then s/he should be kept at home. **If your child has had a temperature above 99, has vomited, or has diarrhea, we require *at least one full day of rest at home following an illness.* We also ask that a child receiving antibiotic medication be kept home for a minimum of three days so that s/he can recover in a healthy way.** It is important that an ill child remain in a quiet and restful environment while ill, so s/he can fully and joyfully participate in the morning activities upon returning. We urge working parents to arrange back-up childcare for these special situations. If your child becomes ill at school, we will contact you immediately.

Any child who has an infection or contagious illness, such as chicken pox, staph infection, or head lice must remain at home. Please report to your child's teacher or to the office any contagious illness that your child has been exposed to *as soon as possible*, so we may give necessary information to other parents.

A Word About Lice ...

With the cooperation of parents, teachers and the administration, head lice can be prevented or detected early and controlled carefully. Every parent will need to take the responsibility to check their child's head and screen the entire family often. Daily checks should be done for three weeks during an active outbreak, and you should continue to make it part of routine hygiene after an active outbreak.

In the event that you do find a louse or a nit on your child, you must contact the school and let us know immediately, so that we can take precautionary measures. You may call the office or contact your child's teacher. In the event that we were to find a louse or nit on your child's head at school, we will contact you. If you have any questions regarding head lice detection, treatment or policy, please feel free to contact the office for more information.

...and Ticks

An integral part of the Waldorf program is having the children outside on a daily basis. This means that there is a chance that the children may come into contact with ticks. Teachers and children are advised to look for ticks after coming in from outdoors. We would like to remind you to also check daily for ticks on your children.

Clothing and Appearance

The Kindergarten is a place of active work and play; and your child will be outside in nature every day for an hour or longer, in all kinds of weather except storms, downpours and bitter cold temperatures. They will get muddy and sandy often, a great indication that they were thoroughly engaged and active in the world of nature! For a child's experience of nature and the elements to be a rewarding one, it is essential that the children have clothing that is loose fitting and practical. This includes sturdy shoes and comfortable clothing appropriate for running and playing, all of which will get dirty. Natural fibers allow the child's body to breathe properly, and in colder weather, layers of warm clothing, sturdy snow boots and waterproof snow mittens will help keep your child warm.

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. Please avoid high fashion; it is distracting and unsafe. We encourage simple clothing at school, and have noticed that printed T-shirts featuring pictures of TV and other characters, creatures, super heroes, dinosaurs, rock stars, skulls, etc., have a negative effect on the imaginative, creative play of the children. We ask that such clothing not be worn at school. When in doubt, take it out...of your "school clothes pile". **Please keep all clothing, shoes, rest gear, and lunch packs free of media or other images and words.**

Also, jewelry of any kind (such as earrings, watches, necklaces, elaborate hair clips/bands) should not be part of school attire. These items are distracting and interfere with the children engaging actively and creatively during school time. In the interest of safety, we especially do not recommend wearing earrings. In keeping with age-appropriate education, please avoid sending your child with painted fingernails, make-up, or other bodily decorations, such as tattoos. Try olive oil to rub off the temporary tattoo.

Please have available (media/picture free) to stay at school:

- **Slippers or inside shoes (No laces, blinking shoes, crocs, flip-flops or gels). Be sure that indoor slippers are well fitted and have the back-of-the-heel section intact.**
- **The children should be able to skip, gallop and run in them safely during circle time and their slippers should stay on their feet well, not randomly falling or sliding off during our day.**
- **Two Changes of clothing:** Socks, underwear, pants, shirts, tights. Write name in all clothing.
- **Waterproof:** Raincoat with hood or rain hat, rain pants, rain boots. Write name on each item.
- **Sun hat** with a brim to be left at school **every day, year round**. Write name on hat.
- **Water bottle:** Reusable with a wide mouth opening for cleaning. Write name near top of bottle.

In Winter:

Every child needs a warm winter hat that covers the ears, *snow-proof* mittens (*not* gloves with places for each finger), sweater, snow jacket, snow pants, and warm snow boots. Write name in each item.

Warmth

Warmth is the balancing between cold and heat. The young child does not yet have a developed feeling for warmth. This ability takes almost seven years to mature. One of the greatest gifts we can give our children is physical warmth as well as the warmth of our soul. It is important to provide young children with layers of wool or silk (for very sensitive skin). Cotton underwear is suitable in very warm weather when there is not much variation in temperature. In this way, we strengthen forces of immunity and

allow our children to grow into adults who understand what the body requires to be healthy.

Sleep

The quality of a child's sleep life has a deep effect on his well-being during the day. "Early to bed and early to rise" is a good rule of thumb. A kindergarten-aged child generally requires 12 hours of sleep (7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m., for example) in order to be fully rested for the activities of the following morning. A regular bedtime surrounded by a calming ritual is 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.

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 parent. We foster a child's imagination by choosing toys that do not limit his ability to play freely. Like food, toys nourish a child. A few simple, natural playthings will help enliven the child's creative play.

Please encourage your child to keep her toys, books and other playthings at home, as bringing toys to school can cause awkward situations among the children. Also, gum and candy should not be brought to school. If you find items from the classroom in your child's pocket (such as crystals, buttons, beeswax, seashells, gnomes, crayons, etc.), simply have your child return them to Kindergarten the next day.

Invitations

We ask that invitations to birthdays or other home events be distributed by mail and not through the school. You will be provided with a list of classmates and their addresses at the beginning of the year.

Snow Days

In the event of a school closing, delayed opening or early dismissal, parents will receive a text and email via the school's automated message system. Additionally, school closing and delayed openings may be checked via KYW1060AM or NBC channel 10 (our school number 867). Please note that in the event of a delayed opening, the Kindergartens will be in session starting at the delayed time.

Media: Television, Videos, Movies, Audio Tapes & Discs, Computers, Virtual Reality

There is a growing awareness in our society that media, in all forms, produces harmful effects in children even beyond the content and time given to it. We have found that this influence significantly interferes with what the Waldorf 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 eliminate the influence of media from his/her life.** The quality of the Kindergarten experience depends on your commitment in this matter and in supporting the school in your home life. So does the integrity of your choice to send your child to the Kimberton Waldorf School, which takes a stand on the media. Parents who are making sacrifices to keep their children at the school also depend on your cooperation regarding this issue. 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. (See reading list for more information on this subject.)

Policy: Videotaping and Photography

No videotaping or photographing is permitted during events such as festivals and birthday celebrations, for pedagogical reasons. Young children fully engage themselves in every activity. Focusing cameras on them interrupts this process, making them self-conscious and leading them away from spontaneous participation. Also, please leave cell phones behind to avoid disruption to the mood we are trying to create at these times.

Parent Participation

We encourage parent participation in the life of the Kindergarten and find it is an essential part of your child's educational journey. During the year individual parent conferences are held. These are opportunities for teachers and parents to share their experiences of the child.

Several times during the year festivals are celebrated in which parent involvement plays an important part. The festivals are connected to the seasons, and your teacher will notify you of the dates well in advance.

Celebrating a child's birthday in the Kindergarten is given much thought and care. Parents are invited to attend for part of the morning. It is a day filled with reverence, joy and festivity. Your child's teacher will discuss the arrangements with you.

Attendance at every parent meeting through the year is expected, and participation in workshops and study groups, when offered, is encouraged. These are also opportunities to explore and learn more about Waldorf education in the early years as a foundation for life.

Occasionally a parent will ask to visit the Kindergarten. While we would like to honor all requests, too many visitors disrupt the rhythm and atmosphere we try to create. We ask for your cooperation and look forward to your participation at festivals and birthday celebrations.

Withdrawal

The Early Childhood faculty reserves the right to ask that a child be withdrawn if, in the judgment of the faculty, the child is unable to become a harmonious member of the group activities or is not ready for separation from his or her home environment, or because of lack of parent cooperation with our policies.

Recommended Reading List

The Child and the Machine – Alison Armstrong & Charles Casement

You Are Your Child's First Teacher – Rahima Baldwin

Festivals, Family and Food – Diana Carey & Judy Large

Lifeways–Working with Family Questions – Gudrun Davy & Bons Voors

The Hurried Child – David Elkind

Miseducation: Preschoolers at Risk – David Elkind

A Guide to Child Health – Michaela Glockler & Wolfgang Goebel

Endangered Minds–Why Children Can't Think – Jane Healy

Failure to Connect – Jane Healy

Your Child's Growing Mind – Jane Healy

Childhood – Caroline von Heydebrand

Toymaking with Children – Freja Jaffke

Work and Play in Early Childhood – Freja Jaffke

Who's Bringing Them Up? – Martin Large

Challenge of the Will – Margret Meyerkort & Rudi Lissau

Beyond the Rainbow Bridge – Barbara Patterson & Pamela Bradlee

Incarnating Child – Joan Salter

The Plug-In Drug – Marie Winn

Education Towards Freedom – Anthroposophic Press

There is a lending library situated in the hallway of the Kindergarten building as a parent resource.