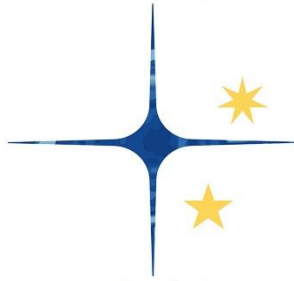


POLARIS
SCHOOL AND CENTRE



learning for our times, teaching in freedom

Polaris School & Centre
2020-2021
Parent Handbook

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GREETINGS

Dear Parents,

We would like to extend a warm welcome to all parents and children joining our school community. May your goodwill and heartfelt participation bear fruit in the life of the School.

We are very grateful for the trust you are placing in us to be a part of your child's education and to help them grow. We sincerely hope that through working together with you, we may grow in the understanding of each other and your children.

We hope that this book will help you become acquainted with the arrangements and details of the everyday life of the School and with the main aspects of its organization. The sooner that these items are known and understood, the sooner you and your children will feel "at home" in the School. It may also suggest to you an area to which you could contribute your thoughts and skills, thus strengthening our school community.

We begin the school year with confidence. May there be joy and inspiration in our teaching, and trust and goodwill in our working together as parents and teachers.

The Circle of Teachers, Administration and Board of Polaris School & Centre

Mission Statement

We awaken knowledge and creative ability through a rich and multifaceted educational experience. Acting with freedom, our teachers evoke reverence for the world and humanity, and guide our students toward a life lived with purpose as responsive citizens of the world.

Vision Statement

The heart of our community beats with a desire to seek a healthy approach to education for our times. We are committed to Rudolf Steiner's vision of a community where we are equals, free in our realms of activity and truly supporting each other in our striving for social and cultural renewal in the world.

Our school is filled with life, beauty, and openness, allowing each student to reach his or her highest potential as a human being with confidence and integrity.

Together, we strive to resolve financial barriers for families, teachers, and staff. Consciously acknowledging every relationship, we create a community of mutually supportive members, all bringing their own needs and gifts in support of the whole organization.

We foster a community of joyful learning and exploration that gives our students the courage to step into the unknown. To nourish a vibrant inner life, we cultivate artistic expression and the celebration of cultural festivals.

Honouring that all is connected, we awaken a sense of service toward humanity and the world, starting in our neighbourhood.

With respect for and reverence of the natural world, the children experience the gifts of each season and the weather every day.

Supporting your Child's Education

Ways you can support your child(ren)'s educational experience:

Harmonizing the influences of home and school:

Ensure a conscious and consistent approach to bedtimes and mealtimes (a nutritious diet, adequate sleep), eliminate or limit the time for TV, movies, videos, computer games, and electronic devices.

Attending to a variety of administrative details conscientiously:

Foster punctuality, inform the school promptly of a child's illness or absence, schedule family holidays during the school holidays, and keep up to date with school life by reading the School's newsletter.

Communicating effectively with teachers and office staff:

Promote an open, friendly, and respectful relationship so that questions, concerns, and potential or actual problems can be addressed in a frank, cordial, and timely way. In the event that parents are unable to meet their contractual obligations to the School, it is their responsibility to initiate and maintain contact with the Administrator to explore alternate financial arrangements.

Keeping the teachers and children in your thoughts:

Picture their relationships and their growth in contemplation or before sleep. Performed over time, this practice will provide insight into the progress and importance of these relationships.

Attending school events:

Attend meetings or events, such as class parent evenings, parent/teacher interviews, grade school presentations, and Winter and Spring Fairs. Your participation in community meetings and cultural events will strengthen the school's ability to support the education of your child.

Volunteering to work for the school:

Find a way to contribute to the life of the school. Children understand the high regard in which their school is held when the parents sacrifice time to foster its growth and health through volunteering. Also, the fellowship that grows, as a result, between and among parents and teachers is a powerful force for the accomplishment of shared goals.

Speaking well of the school:

Be enthusiastic in your support of the school. Your positive endorsements will lead others whose children would benefit from Waldorf education to consider this option. Your attitude will also have a powerful influence on your child(ren)'s feelings towards their school.

Nurturing gratitude and love for their teachers in the hearts of the children:

Support those who serve your children and the ideals of Waldorf education. Gratitude is the wellspring of a happy life and nurtures those whose capacity for it has been developed as well as those whose efforts merit it.

Developing your understanding of the philosophy of Waldorf Education:

Attend lectures and workshops; ask teachers for suggestions regarding reading material. Deepening your understanding of the education your child is receiving and the value of harmonizing home and school will help you to support your child's growth and development.

THE SCHOOL YEAR

School Calendar

A School Calendar is available on the parent portal section of the website and is part of the School Directory.

Parent Portal

One can access the [Parent Portal](#) using the password “waldorfparent”. It contains the School Directory, School Calendar, COVID Policy and other relevant information for families.

School Hours

Kindergarten Program

Mornings	8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Afternoons	12:30 - 2:30 p.m.

Grade School

8:30 a.m. - 2:40 p.m.

Upper Years

8:30 a.m. – 3:15 p.m.

After School Care – not currently available

The school does not provide before or after care at this time. The Overbrook Community Centre, does offer an aftercare program and is within walking distance. Note that they will pick up children from the school and walk them over. Some families have used this option in the past – we are not endorsing or recommending this program but letting families know that it is an option. Please contact the office for more information.

Please ensure that your child(ren) are not left unsupervised outside or anywhere in the building either before or after school. **Children must be picked up by 2:50 pm as there is no aftercare staff available. There will be a \$1/minute charge for pick up after that time.**

Late Arrivals and Absences

If your child is going to be late or absent for the day or for a part of the day, call the School by 8:30 a.m. 613-842-4322. Please leave a message on the answering machine, including the date, name of the child and reason for the absence, if no one is available to answer your call. A record of a child’s absences will be kept.

Parents are encouraged to schedule regular doctor and dentist appointments for after school hours. If a prolonged absence is unavoidable, please consult with your child's teacher in advance. Note that it is not possible to prorate financial contributions for such absences.

Dropping Off and Picking Up

Kindergarten students are dropped off and picked up in their classroom. The unstructured beginning of the day allows for some flexibility in arrival time. There are three parking spots along the east side of the building reserved for this purpose. Entrance C will be open from 8:30 to 8:50 am and 2:30 to 2:45pm. Should you require access outside those times please call the office.

Note that when inside the Hardini Centre all visitors, including parents, are asked to wear masks when in the hallways and bathrooms as per our COVID Policy.

Grade School students will be dropped off and picked up at the green field behind the Hardini Centre, between the two flood lights. Note that there is ample parking available. **Drop-off** begins at 8:15 am and students will begin coming into the school at 8:25 a.m. so classes can begin at 8:30 a.m. with greetings and the morning verse. In order for the children and the teachers to fully experience this beginning of their day together, please ensure that your child arrives in good time to make the transition to the school day pleasant, fitting and unhurried.

If your child(ren) will be picked up by anyone, other than a parent, an authorization form must be completed and returned to the office. Similarly, should you be making an unexpected change to pick up arrangements, please contact the school to inform us of the change.

Transportation

Carpooling can ease the burden of daily driving for many families in our community. A common way to establish a car pool is to use the School Directory (available on the [Parent Portal](#)) to identify which families live in your area or travel through it on the way to the School. A few phone calls to become acquainted with the families in an area usually results in a satisfactory arrangement.

School Cancellations/Snow Days

On school days when there is inclement weather and school buses in Ottawa have been cancelled due to weather conditions, all classes at Polaris will be cancelled but the school will remain open to those who require care.

Note if, under extreme circumstances, the Ottawa School Boards decides to actually close all of their schools due to inclement weather, Polaris will also be closed and no care provided that day.

We will do our best to inform parents via email in the event of class cancellations and/or school closures. Please check your messages before leaving home on days when the weather is severe and we would recommend that you check the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority website; <http://www.ottawaschoolbus.ca/cancellation-delay-details> (please refresh link each time) to confirm. At times, with our limited human resources, we are unable to send out notifications in a timely fashion.

If specific classes and/or the school is mandated to close, we will switch to online learning based on the age of the students. For younger grades support will be given to parents to continue learning at home. Older grades will switch to online learning when/if needed.

Grade School Presentations

Grade School Presentations are an opportunity for the children to present selections from the curriculum as a gift to parents, family, and friends. They are rehearsed for weeks in advance and are an integral part of each year's work. Because of their importance, it is essential that all members of the class participate unless prevented by illness.

These presentations are followed by an opportunity to view students' work in the classrooms.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 a decision was made that Presentations would be limited to individual class communities and not the entire school. We will inform parents if this changes throughout the year as the situation evolves.

ADMINISTRATION

Financial Contribution

Financial Obligations and Terms of Enrollment:

1. Students who enrol at Polaris School and Centre are entered for the contract period of one year. Parent(s)/ guardian(s) remain responsible for annual contributions, as per the attached invoice, in accordance with the terms listed in **Section C – Withdrawal & Refund Policy**, found in **Section C** of the Enrollment Contract.
2. There is an 8-week probationary period for all new students and all grade one students, during which they can withdraw without penalty. As noted in **Section C – Withdrawal & Refund Policy**, found in **Section C** of the Enrollment Contract.
3. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are responsible for informing the School Office of any anticipated difficulties in making monthly payments.
4. If a family's account becomes overdue, a monthly 1% interest charge will apply (12% annually). Failure to pay the sums due under this contract may result in termination of this agreement and the dismissal of the child(ren) from the School.
5. A charge of \$25 will be applied for any cheque that is returned to the school by your financial institution.

Student Supplies

There is an annual Supplies Fee which covers the cost of main lesson books, painting and craft materials, handwork supplies, etc. Not included in this fee is the cost of musical instruments, class trips, and at times, materials needed for special projects. The School Supply fee is to be paid by September 30th.

The School Directory

The School Directory, containing the names, addresses, email addresses, and home telephone numbers of Polaris Families and Teachers' contact information, is available on the Parent Portal section of our website. Please check this data for inaccuracies and report these or any changes that may occur throughout the year to the Office. This list is for the private use of parents and is not to be used for commercial purposes.

It is important that the Office be informed of any changes to parents' work numbers or cell phone numbers; these numbers are for the use of teachers and office staff only and will not be circulated within the community.

Illness / Accidents / Insurance

Severe allergies and/or health conditions should be reported to the School on the Medical Information form. Please ensure that the Office is notified of any changes to a child's condition. If your child carries an EpiPen, the administrator will work with you to create an individual plan in accordance with Sabrina's Law. Please contact the Office for details.

When minor accidents occur or symptoms of an acute ailment arise, an initial assessment of the child's condition will be made by the class teacher or teacher on duty; if the child needs to be sent home, the parent(s) or guardian(s) will be contacted.

Incident Reports are completed and filed whenever a student or staff member has been hurt such that they cannot continue with their regularly scheduled activities and/or must seek medical attention or when there is a potential of serious harm should the event reoccur and circumstances change. Incident Reports are kept in the office.

This year, due to COVID-19, we are asking families to be extra cautious and keep their child(ren) home if they are unwell. All families are expected to adhere to our COVID Policy which will evolve throughout the year. An updated copy of the policy can always be found on the Parent Portal.

The School has liability insurance which covers bodily injury and property damage, whether such injury occurs on site or during supervised school excursions.

Emergency medical treatment of the children in the event of a serious accident or illness is covered by the appropriate provincial health plan. Please ensure that the school has each child's health card numbers.

COMMUNICATION

Communication

We ask teachers, staff and parents **not to initiate discussions** about a child(ren) in the classroom, playground or pick up/drop off area as it is not healthy to have these discussions in front of the child(ren). Arrangements should be made to either call or meet at a convenient time.

Experience has taught us that in person communication is always best, and if this is not possible then a phone call is recommended. Communication via email should be limited to arranging a time to meet or call. Emails can so easily be misinterpreted and sending emails back and forth can create tension and be time consuming. It is more effective and advantageous to discuss things in person or on the phone, fostering a healthy relationship between parents/guardians and the class teacher or other staff members.

Teachers, staff and parents/guardians are encouraged to bring any questions or issues in a timely manner. The longer we wait to bring a matter forward, the more difficult it can be to address. Teachers will reach out to families if there are any issues which go beyond what would be considered typical student behaviour at school. Teachers will also do their best to follow up with families to ensure that issues have been resolved or dealt with accordingly.

Procedures for Handling Concerns, Conflicts and Incidents

Parents/guardians, teachers and staff are encouraged to communicate so that questions, concerns, and potential or actual problems can be addressed in a frank, cordial, and timely manner. Communication will be effective if both parties foster an open, friendly, and respectful relationship.

Parents/guardians are asked to bring any questions they have to the child's Class Teacher or the Administrator, depending upon the nature of the concern. Often, a discussion, either by phone or in person, is all that is needed for a concern to be put to rest.

However, if it is felt that one's concern or question has not been addressed accordingly, we ask parents/guardians to request a subsequent meeting with either another member of the Circle of Teachers and/or the Administrator present. Decisions and action items from these meetings will be noted, to facilitate follow up. The Administrator can make all necessary arrangements.

In the event that the concern persists, the parents/guardians can request a follow up meeting to address this or write a letter or email to the School (sent to the Administrator), which will be forwarded to both the Circle of Teachers and the Board of Directors.

It is sometimes the case that discussions that require Circle of Teachers and/or Board involvement may reveal a divergence of values between School and parents that no mediation can bridge. Both School and parents can come to this recognition, honouring and respecting the freedom of both parties to live their values and, indeed, their duty to live from their own truths.

Student Evaluation Techniques

In Waldorf schools, methods of student assessment are qualitative and require ongoing communication between parents and teachers. The following list outlines the main elements used in the Grade School assessment process:

1. Daily assessment by the class teacher and subject teachers of written, artistic, and oral work;
2. Circle of Teacher meetings;
3. Parent/teacher interviews, and ongoing conversations throughout the year;
4. Written report at the end of the school year.

Attending class parent meetings, Grade school presentations, and parent/teacher interviews gives parents an opportunity to gain information about their child and about the work being done in the class. Please notify your Class Teacher if you are unable to attend.

Kindergarten parents should contact Ms. Osman to arrange for in-person or phone interviews to discuss their child(ren)'s progress. Parent evenings and parent/teacher interviews will also be held throughout the year. Please note that for our Early Years Programs, evaluations are done orally to provide a living picture of the child's development at school, and no written end of year reports are kept.

Child Study

The very core of the Waldorf slogan "Receive the Child in Reverence" is the inner attitude and practice aspired to by teachers in a Waldorf school. To this end a collegial part of this ethos is carried by the whole Circle of Teachers through what is called a child study. A child study is a technique unique to Waldorf schools whereby the child becomes the focus of attentive observation on the part of the whole Circle of Teachers. The teachers devote a meeting to share observations about the child's physical organization and appearance, the child's behaviour in class and outside, both as a

participant, learner and contributor. The teachers also share about how the child is in relationship and also about how the child shows their own individuality – likes and dislikes, social ease, imaginative abilities, willingness to learn and to work. Then the Circle of Teachers lives with the questions that arise out of this bigger picture of the child at school and reflect on it. If it is possible, some ideas of what can be done to enhance, help and harmonize the child’s experience at school and in the world come forward as a plan on the child’s behalf. Through this phenomenological approach the child’s individuality informs, so to speak, the teachers in how they can best serve him/her.

In Rudolf Steiner’s own words, "But when you accustom yourself to making real efforts to get to know the children (psychologically), you gradually form a different relationship with them, simply as an outcome of such endeavour. Getting to know them more deeply does not just mean recognizing their characteristics; a different relationship arises with them when you try to get to know them better." (1) In fact if we want to know a child, it is important to understand that every child presents us with a unique “riddle” which teachers are called to ponder on.

At Polaris School and Centre we value the primary and unique role of the parents in the lives of their children. We ensure that the parents be informed before we do a child study and obtain their agreement. The parents may be asked to share information that would be helpful, to meet with the Circle of Teachers beforehand, or to attend a part of the child study. We resolve to conduct the meeting in a manner as considerate and respectful as if the child themselves were present and to follow up with the parents afterward. As a Circle of Teachers we are committing ourselves to endeavour to turn our benevolent collective attention to every child attending the school.

(1) Steiner, Rudolf: CW 300a. Meeting of 23 September 1920. Konferenzen mit Lehrern der Freien Waldorfschule Stuttgart. GA 300a. Dornach. 1975.

News and Notices

The school’s electronic *Newsletter* is sent to families at the beginning of each week. The deadline for submissions of content is Friday afternoon. They can be sent to the School’s office email. Since this is the school’s main communication method, we request that parents read the *Newsletter* thoroughly and note important dates and events.

Occasionally, the Office will send forms and documents to families. These will come home in a large envelope with the family's name indicated on it. We ask that parents remove the enclosures and ensure that the envelope is returned to the school on the first school day of the following week.

BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINE

Introduction: Our approach to behaviour and discipline

The goal of discipline at Polaris School and Centre is to establish a healthy social environment within which the teachers can connect with the children, build relationships, and facilitate the

learning process. The school environment provides many opportunities for the children to be in a social setting, in relationship with adults and with their friends, both in the classroom setting and outdoors. Our intention is to create an atmosphere of emotional and physical safety, where respectful and courteous behaviour is living.

The cornerstone of Waldorf education at the elementary level is that the teacher's role be one of loving authority, with the responsibility of holding the space for the children's school experience. Limits and boundaries are brought to the children with kindness and firmness and evolve as the children get older. The teachers strive to nurture warm relationships with each child as an individual and to build a caring class community. It is a healthy balance when the needs of individual children can be met within the sustainable functioning of the whole group.

Discipline at our school is seen within the context of the larger developmental picture. Children at different ages are at varying stages of social and emotional maturity, which informs our thoughts about children's behaviour. Even within a class, children's differing maturation levels affect their abilities for self-regulation, impulse control and adaptive behaviour. Learning difficulties and sensory issues also influence children's experience at school.

Since children are in the process of developing their social-emotional and academic skills, incidents around children's behaviour are bound to happen. There are many other possible contributing factors including physical discomfort (hunger, fatigue, illness etc), emotions, life events outside of school, and social dynamics at school.

Teachers will strive to be observant of what is happening with the children, but there will be times when they will not see something happening. Sometimes children may not share with a teacher about an incident or about how they are feeling. We rely on you as parents to bring forward any concerns that are shared when the child is at home. Teachers will also communicate in a timely manner when a child's behaviour is of concern. When necessary, a discussion between parents and teachers about how to support a child will follow. In the class and school community, we hope to work with the qualities of acceptance and compassion as we resolve incidents around children's behaviour.

Prevention:

The teachers work preventively to create class conditions amenable to prosocial behaviour. First and foremost is building a strong relationship to each child through interest and connection. The daily routine of greeting a child as they enter the classroom allows the seeing of the individual child and provides the teacher with a baseline for the coming day. Warm greetings between the teacher and parent models to the child the trusting and respectful relationship necessary for a positive school experience.

Close observation of the children is a fundamental practice that helps create a holistic picture of each child, as does sharing between all the teachers involved in the child's education. Teachers strive to be responsive to the pedagogical needs of their particular class by observing the group closely. Teachers work with creating a healthy daily rhythm of inward and outward activities. This allows the students to experience their lessons as a flow of breathing in and breathing out, which is also facilitated by the arts and movement integrated into the curriculum.

Parents working closely with the teachers to support the values of the school are an invaluable resource in the prevention of discipline problems. The physical and social-emotional well-being, habits and attitudes of the children are major factors in creating a child's receptivity to the learning environment. To that end ensuring enough sleep, good nutrition, downtime and a calm

morning routine is very helpful to a child's entry into the classroom. Paying attention to a child's sensory diet allows them the opportunity to experience activities without needing to cope with over-stimulation. This can mean working to eliminate or minimize screen exposure, overscheduling, over-verbalization and exposure to information. Doing so helps the class learning environment by what is brought into the class.

Students will be informed of the expectations of their teacher(s), along with clearly stated limits and boundaries around behaviour in the classroom and at recess, as well as in the building generally. Modeling these practices and walking through transitions physically can be very helpful to children to internalize them. Clarity is very important in defining acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. These rules should be clearly stated at regular intervals (see Section II in the Behaviour and Discipline Policy).

When age-appropriate, a strong sense of personal responsibility and a willingness to cooperate with teachers and fellow students is essential, as is a willingness to work towards the resolution of conflicts. Clear and open communication between the students and their teachers helps lessen discipline problems.

Details about the discipline practices and procedures can be found in the Behaviour and Discipline Policy, available on the Parent Portal.

Each parent of grade school children is asked to review these basic guidelines and classroom rules with their child in words which the child will understand:

Basic Guidelines

- a) Be courteous and respectful in word, gesture and deed, to teachers, staff, fellow students and visitors regardless of gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs, individual needs, and social class
- b) Follow instructions given by teachers in class and on the school grounds. These include bringing to school only approved objects and playing games that are deemed safe and appropriate by the adults. No penknives allowed Monday to Thursday – only allowed
- c) Maintain orderly and suitable conduct in classrooms, buildings and grounds. Walking quietly when circulating in the building shows respect to the other people who share the space with us.
- d) Tell an adult (teachers, staff) if a problematic situation is witnessed. Look for a peaceful way to resolve conflicts by seeking the help of an adult when necessary to do so.
- e) Remain on school property during the school day unless specific permission has been given to do otherwise.
- f) Show respect and care for the school building and its contents and for the natural environment that surrounds the School.
- g) Show respect for the property and privacy of other students and of teachers by refraining from going into desks, backpacks, jackets or lockers without permission.
- h) Follow the School's guidelines for clothing, grooming and jewelry as elaborated on page 14 & 15 of the Handbook.

- i) Arrive punctually and attend all classes, unless an exemption has been requested in writing or a phone message by parent or guardian. Go out promptly at recess time and at the end of the day.
- j) Observe the School's prohibitions against the possession and/or use of gum; vulgar or profane language; portable music players, cell phones, video games or other electronic equipment; controlled substances; weapons; and printed material relating to subject matter unsuitable in a school environment. *
- k) Refrain from romantically-inspired public displays of affection that, in the teacher's opinion, are distracting or disturbing to other students, or undermining the social well-being of the class or school.

*Note that prohibited items will be confiscated and may be returned at the end of the day at the discretion of the teacher.

Classroom Rules

From the above **Guidelines for Student Behaviour** the following **Basic Classroom Rules** have been derived:

- a) Hands must be raised and the student recognized before speaking during a lesson (no interrupting);
- b) Permission from the teacher must be obtained before leaving the classroom;
- c) Classroom materials and furnishings are to be handled with care;
- d) The School's guidelines for clothing, grooming and jewelry (see Harmonizing our Efforts - Handbook) are to be followed;
- e) Indoor shoes must be worn at all times when not going outdoors;
- f) The classroom, the child's desk, and cubby/coat area, are to be kept neat and all personal and school materials are to be stored in an appropriate manner;
- g) Snacks and lunches must be cleaned up prior to the next activity;
- h) Water is the only refreshment permitted during class time;
- i) Homework and assignments are to be handed in on the day it is due, unless an extension is granted;
- j) All required material for subject classes (instruments, eurythmy shoes etc.) must be brought to school on the day of the class;
- k) Permission from the teacher must be obtained before operating heaters, lights, fans or opening or closing windows;
- l) Classroom behaviours do not include those that would be appropriate outdoors (running, loud talking, etc.); and

m)The School's prohibitions against the use of gum, vulgar or profane language, and cell phones, tablets other electronic equipment must be observed.

More information about our practices and procedures, including our approach to bullying, can be found in the Behaviour and Discipline Policy available on the Parent Portal.

In Loco Parentis

A close relationship between student and teacher is an integral and acceptable part of the Waldorf School philosophy. This may include a healthy physical contact between teacher and pupil including hugs, holding hands, or other normal physical contact of a sort usually found within a family. Taking into account the current situation all teachers and staff will do their best to ensure that they are physical distancing whenever possible.

HARMONIZING OUR EFFORTS

The following recommendations are based on the experience of Waldorf teachers in schools all over the world. We ask for your co-operation in these matters because we believe that by harmonizing the influences of home and school, your child will derive the greatest benefit from a Waldorf education.

Rhythms at Home and School

The first step in providing a home life in harmony with the school's approach is to become familiar with the principles underlying Waldorf education. This may be done by reading books on the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner and by attending the lectures and class meetings convened each year.

A further step is the recognition of the importance of "rhythm". One of the hallmarks of a Waldorf school is the presence of daily, weekly, and seasonal rhythms. The school day is rhythmic, and a similarly rhythmical home life harmonizes with the school experience, strengthening the child and making life more harmonious for the whole family.

Simple rituals help to mark the milestones of the school day – the lighting of a candle at morning verse, a blessing at snack time, a goodbye circle or song. Regular times for meals, chores, play, homework, and bed are helpful in continuing this rhythm.

Rhythm is essential to all things which have life. Adults are often unaware of natural rhythms, but the child is utterly bound up with organic rhythms. Regular patterns of work and play, of eating and sleeping, lead to a healthy will development. In the words of Caroline von Heydebrand, one of the first Waldorf teachers, "Nothing makes a child so wild and nervous as capriciousness on the part of grown-ups. Children are full of a deep trust and when they can rely on a wholesome ordering of their daily life, the basis is provided upon which the moral life as an adult can freely and quietly unfold."

In these challenging and busy times, it often seems impossible to create a rhythmical and calm ordering of the day. However, by bringing candlelight and a song, verse, or prayer to meal times and bedtimes, we can change these times from being chaotic and draining to being calm, healing, and nourishing.

Media

It is a common observation throughout the community of Waldorf schools that electronic media – DVDs, video games, movies, radios, mobile phones, iPads/tablets, personal gaming devices, and television – do not promote the balanced development of the child. And this view is increasingly supported by the research of outside experts.

To quote the Summerfield Waldorf School in California, "the young child's ability to picture, to envision, to see inwardly is crucial to the development of creativity. This delicate faculty is overwhelmed and eventually crushed by the constant bombardment of media images. The child is taught a passive relationship to the world – outer stimulation and inner emptiness..." It has also been observed that television interferes, to a significant degree, with the healthy flowering of the child's feeling life, a flowering which is specifically nurtured by Waldorf education. Recent studies have confirmed that the debilitating effects of television watching (learning disabilities among them) occur irrespective of viewing content.

Brain research has noted the effects of media exposure on a child's sensitive nervous system, which can become overstimulated and hyper-aroused from moderate amounts of screen time. Additionally, screen time takes time away from other physical and movement activities which are crucial to a child's healthy development. It seems that a child's development, as a whole, is affected by screen time.

For these reasons we recommend reducing or eliminating time for television, movies, video games, and electronic media. Literature on the effects of screen time on children is available at the School. Your child's teacher will also be pleased to discuss this matter further.

Clothing

All children require suitable indoor gym shoes which are to be supplied from home. Indoor shoes should be able to be worn outdoors in case of an emergency so please ensure that your child's shoes can be worn outside in rain or snow if needed. There will be at least one practice fire drill per year.

Clothing should be appropriate for the specific circumstances of a particular day, for example, whether a student has Art, a presentation, or a Gym class. Your child should be dressed to be comfortable sitting, playing, and moving actively indoors and outdoors.

Students will spend time out-of-doors in all seasons, in all weather, and at all ages. **Please ensure that children have waterproof outerwear when needed and are dressed appropriately for the weather.** Special care should be taken during the fall and spring when mornings are cold and temperatures rise throughout the day. Layers are best for good temperature control. A child will not enjoy their time outdoors if they are wet or cold.

Appropriate student dress is an integral factor in creating a healthy educational setting. The appearance of students has a definite influence on the performance of schoolwork, the social atmosphere of the classroom, the comfort of other students, and the perception of younger students. **Please, no writing, no logos or no media or cartoon images on shirts.** These can be very distracting. Patterns are fine (stripes, florals, etc.), but plain clothing is best since some children are greatly affected by visual stimulation.

The school will have a supply of plain t-shirts which the child will be asked to wear on top of their clothing.

Note that headgear of any kind (i.e. scarves, hats, sunglasses), must be removed and stored upon entering a school building, unless worn for religious reasons.

The wearing of jewelry is discouraged because of the possibility of loss and the safety factor.

Please label the clothing and belongings of children in the Kindergarten programs and the lower grades. Kindergarten and lower school children should also be provided with an extra set of clothing in case accidents occur. Even with older children, an extra pair of socks, mitts, etc. tend to be used and welcome.

Please ensure that out-of-season clothing is taken home as unclaimed clothing will be given to a charity at the end of the year, or kept in the extra-clothing basket at school.

Children found to be in contravention of the School's guidelines for clothing, grooming and jewelry will be asked to remove jewelry and to cover up inappropriate clothing.

Snacks and Lunches

We ask that you provide your child with nutritious snacks and lunches. (No gum, candy, or other junk food, please.) During the winter months, you may wish to provide a warming lunch in a thermos. We encourage the use of reusable containers for food and beverages to minimize the "garbage" left behind, and to reinforce the environmental consciousness that flows naturally from Waldorf education.

Allergies

Polaris is a peanut-free school. We ask for your cooperation in ensuring Polaris is a safe environment for all of the children. Please do not send any peanuts or items containing peanuts to school.

Additionally, we would ask that you take care in the morning before school if you have had peanuts or peanut food products. Please remember to wash your hands to help reduce the risk to those with severe allergies in our school.

Note that our policy may change with the addition of new students. More restrictions may be imposed as needed. Parents will be informed of any changes.

Promoting Health and Learning

Because Waldorf education is concerned with the whole child and finds a relationship between health and learning, teachers are interested in your child's health, illnesses (past and present), sleeping and eating habits, stress, and rhythms at home.

If your child seems overtired or appears to be coming down with a cold or other illness, please keep them at home. A young child who is overtired may find the activity of a school day

overwhelming and return home worse for having been at school. When in doubt, keep your child at home for a day of rest after an illness.

If your child has a communicable disease, such as pink eye, impetigo, gastroenteritis, lice, etc., we ask that parents inform the Class Teacher and/or the School as soon as possible. The families in that class will be informed, and the child may be asked to stay home as per the City of Ottawa Public Health guidelines. For more information visit <http://www.ottawapublichealth.ca>.

Please ensure you are familiar with our COVID Policy which is available on the Parent Portal. All families are responsible for conducting the COVID Screening prior to coming to school. Any child who is ill should remain at home until their symptoms have subsided.

The Celebration of Birthdays

Each child's birthday is celebrated in class with love and ceremony on the day. If your child's birthday falls on the weekend or during school holidays, then we celebrate it on the next school day. In the past parents have been asked to supply a special birthday snack that can be shared by the class. This year, due to COVID-19, we will be re-examining this throughout the year, please check with the class teacher.

The Yearly Calendar

Festivals

The celebration of seasonal festivals is a feature of Waldorf Schools all over the world. Just as there is a rhythm to each day, week, or month, there is a rhythm to the year. The glorious signs of the changing seasons bring visible markers throughout the year. Each season has different tasks associated with it, such as spring planting and autumn harvesting. Working with nature and the work associated with each season can be a strong foundation for the celebration of festivals with children.

For most people, annual festivities related to religion and culture are also a much-anticipated part of a yearly rhythm. At the Polaris School and Centre, there is a commitment to the planning of celebrations that are inclusive. The shared universal elements that accompany each season will be celebrated in a way that respects the children in their developmental stage and supports each family in honouring their own celebrations. The aim is to foster a sense of reverence and gratitude.

In the younger grades, the children love preparing for festivals by decorating the room, baking special treats, learning special songs, etc. Nature stories and special tales help bring deeper significance to the children in a pictorial way. Celebrations that mark the signal of events in the year are especially important for older children, who also need to be in touch with the rhythms around them.

The celebration of festivals cultivates an awareness of seasonal rhythms, and a sense of community among children, teachers, parents, and friends. Some festivals may involve the participation of our school community while others are celebrated in class.

This year, we hope to plan various events with the help of the School Community, such as a Lantern Walk in November, a Winter Fair, a Spring Fair in May, and a Year-End Picnic in June. However, these activities may be impacted by current COVID-19 restrictions in the area.

In addition, we will hold regular “All-Community” gatherings to allow families to come together and strengthen everyone’s sense of belonging to the Polaris School and Centre Community, once again, we may have to resort to virtual meetings if/when needed throughout the year due to the current COVID situation in Ottawa.

The School Calendar is available on the parent portal and is also in our weekly Newsletter. It contains all upcoming events and is updated throughout the year.