



Friday, July 10, 2020

## **The Acorn School Covid-19 Guidelines A Community Approach**

In these times of uncertainty, our community is being called to work together to make it possible for The Acorn School to continue on with our offering of a Waldorf program in Charleston. With this in mind, the school is implementing the following changes to adapt to the new Covid-19 circumstances.

The Board values the importance of keeping our program as similar as possible to what the children have experienced up to now. Allowing the children to have an authentic Waldorf experience is our top priority. Many of the daily rituals will remain the same. The commitment to the essential elements of practical activities and play based experiential learning is unchanged.

Some of our daily rituals will change. In that the science is clear that outdoor environments are safer than indoor spaces, to start the year, our morning program will be held exclusively outdoors from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm. We are in the process of transforming the outdoor classroom to accommodate this change. There will be a new 12' by 16' pergola to provide additional shade, protection during heavy rain events, and another option for a working space. There will be a sink with running water and soap for frequent hand washing. There will be two lead teachers and the children will be divided into smaller groups and separate work stations.

There may be times when the weather forces us inside. On those days we will split the children into smaller groups and play in separate rooms. We want to keep the indoor play days to a minimum. As the year unfolds, we will revisit these changes with the hope of returning to the 2-hours in, 2-hours out approach that we used last year.

Our new morning drop off ritual will ask parents to take their children to the entry gate to the right of the church chapel. They will be met by one of our staff. The staff person will check to make sure everyone in the household is symptom free and that the child's temperature has been checked by the parent that morning. If not, the staff person will do a temperature check. At that point, the parent may escort the child to the play area and leave them with Ms. Katie or Ms. Judy.



For the noon pickup, we ask that parents enter through the same gate by the chapel. Please find your child and leave promptly.

In the afternoon, in that the number of students is significantly smaller, the children will eat lunch and nap indoors. We will spread them out as much as possible and the schedule will remain the same. For the 3:00 pm and 5:00 pm pick up times, please enter through the front door of the church.

### **First Grade Drop Off Guidelines**

First grade students should be dropped off between 8:00 and 8:15 at the church entrance. A staff member will greet you with questions about Covid-19 symptoms and to make sure that your child's temperature has been taken that morning. If not, the staff member will do a temperature check. Once this is complete, the student will be led to the chairs in the hallway outside the classroom where they will be asked to wait quietly. Classes will begin promptly at 8:15. Please understand that in the first grade it is very important that the students arrive on time. Each class day begins with a welcoming ritual with each individual student, then the lesson begins. At pick up time, you will be met by a staff member at the front door.

The tentative first grade schedule is attached to this email.

### **Covid-19 Related Closures**

It is likely that our community, even with all our safeguards, will have cases of Covid 19. If this occurs, we will notify everyone immediately and take measures to close the school and sanitize the play areas. In the past, we have always followed the lead of the Charleston County School District. Moving forward, in regard to Covid-19 related closures, The Acorn School will act independently of the CCSD.

The standard for the number of school days per year is 180 and that will be our goal for the year. Our current schedule for the 20-21 school year has 183 school days scheduled. (Keep in mind that every year we have lost one week of school to a hurricane closure.) Traditionally, we have ended the school year on the first Friday of June. This year, the final day of school will be variable based on how many make up days we tack on to the June calendar to compensate for Covid-19 closures. As June approaches we will notify you about the extended schedule.



## **Covid-19 Procedures**

The Acorn School is committed to providing a safe environment for our students. We will employ temperature checks, handwashing, and will divide the children into smaller groups.

Masks will not be mandatory. If a parent wants their child to wear a mask, we will do our best to accommodate that request. With young children there is no chance of having mask compliance 100% of the time. We ask for parental understanding of this reality.

Teachers will make their own decisions of wearing a mask or not based on their Covid-19 risk factors.

We will not be implementing a strict social distancing policy. Again, with young children this is not possible. We will have two lead teachers, and two smaller groups that work apart some of the time. In general, we want the class time to be as close to our traditional approach as possible.

In the first-grade classroom enrollment is limited to ten students. Desks will be separated by at least three feet. We will also have fans in the windows, one blowing fresh air in, and one blowing the air out. If a parent requests that their child wear a mask, that request will be honored. We will also have additional sanitation measures in place for all furniture, frequently touched surfaces, and for the bathroom.

## **Parental Responsibilities**

Our staff will follow these guidelines and do whatever we can to make this a “Covid-19 free year.” These efforts are fruitless without parental cooperation. We urge you to continue to be rigorous in guarding your family’s health. We also ask for transparent communications in regard to Covid-19 symptoms. If someone is symptomatic let us know. If someone tests positive let us know. If you are exposed to someone who has tested positive let us know. If your child develops symptoms while at school be prepared to pick them up right away.



Parents alone are in control of where they go, where their children go, and who the children play with. The science clearly shows that indoor gatherings of ten or more and congregating in large groups indoors or outdoors without social distancing, results in virus transmission among the participants. If a child or a parent participates in these types of activities, our entire community is at risk.

Before school begins, we will ask that all parents sign a Covid-19 waiver. This document will state that the parents have read and understand our guidelines. It will state that the parents are willing to abide by the guidelines. It will absolve the school of responsibility for any Covid-19 related illness that may occur.

These guidelines will be fluid based on the facts of the Covid-19 epidemic in the Charleston area. The school will be adjusting our response as we go. We ask for your understanding as we move through these unprecedented times together.