

LITTLE ACORN SCHOOL

-A NURTURING PLACE FOR CHILDREN TO SPROUT-

LET'S WEAVE A WEB OF SUPPORT FOR
YOU AND YOUR CHILD !

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Welcome to Little Acorn School !!!!

Little Acorn School is a magical place where the opportunity for child's play is honored and held sacred. It is a place for your children to feel free to live into their senses. A place where children can experience the joy and wonder of nature and their imaginations flourish. It is a bridge between your home and the great big world beyond the home while fostering a rich engagement with all that is wholesome and natural.

The intention of this handbook is to create a connection between home and Little Acorn School and shed some light on the workings of our school, and what we require of parents to best support your child and work together to support our school community.

It is my hope that you will always feel comfortable to enter into dialogue with me. I am here to support you with any questions or concerns you may have so that together we can ensure that your child is being cared for with consistency. We are a team! Together, we WILL create a warm and loving journey for your child through childhood, and a nurturing, supportive community of friendship among both parents and children at Little Acorn School!

Kindly,

Jenny Brantley and Joel Besemer

TRANSITIONING... FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

Parents sometimes ask how best to prepare their child for school. As the exciting day draws near, (a week or two in advance), it is important to speak with your child about the coming of school, perhaps creating a special story in your own words. You could also spend time making a special blanket or pillow together to honor this time. Or you could select indoor shoes together. Also you might create a family ritual of a “get ready chair.” You can start readying your child for the school day mornings by selecting your child’s clothing before bedtime. Then you can lay the clothing out on a chair before going to bed. This ritual is of great help in establishing a peaceful morning rhythm for the new school-days to come.

RHYTHM

Mother Nature provides us with seasonal rhythms and within her fold we live into weekly and daily rhythms. The Waldorf Early childhood curriculum is founded upon rhythm. What a wonder it can be to notice the changes in the outdoors as we move from summer into autumn, autumn into winter, winter into spring. As we celebrate the seasonal rhythms at Sunseeds, we have special seasonal festivals to mark the “soul mood” of each season. In this way, the child learns to take notice of all that is rhythmical and ever-changing within Nature. Within this fold of Mother Nature’s rhythms, a daily and weekly rhythm is also held. At Little Acorn School we have painting days and drawing days, baking days and woodworking days. Rhythms like these help to foster a sense of security in the children as they come into the classroom each day. We always follow a flow of activity that alternates carefully between

expansive activities and more focused activities. It is the understanding of Waldorf Early Childhood educators that children thrive when they can move from more active or busy activities into more restful or dreamy activities and then back again. Routine or rhythm helps the children feel safe and secure; for in rhythm, children always know what is coming next. Young children thrive when this sense of rhythm is provided in the home as well. Regular mealtimes, bedtimes, and weekly activities create a sense of security for the growing child. You can support the work and play your children will find while at Little Acorn School immensely by simply ensuring that your child arrives at school well rested (ideally with 12 hours of sleep each night,) and well nourished with a healthy protein-rich breakfast each morning. If you would like suggestions on establishing a healthy home rhythm, please speak with me--- I have many helpful ideas and resources.

CREATIVE DISCIPLINE

The word "discipline" is from the Latin word *disciplina* meaning "instruction and training". It's derived from the root word *discere* , which is "to learn."

Young children respond to kind, loving, clear and firm (if needed) communication. It is with this awareness that discipline is approached in a Waldorf inspired early childhood setting. It is a known fact that children in early childhood naturally imitate their caregivers. As teachers we aim to be models worthy of a child's imitation. Therefore, first and foremost, a great all-pervasive love is the foundation of all discipline within the classroom at Little Acorn School.

We practice conflict resolution, NVC communication, taking and giving space and pause as well as practice breathing techniques. We do not use punitive practices.

Disruptive behavior is always guided in a gentle, non-threatening, yet effective manner, (“calm yet firm” briefly states my approach). The rhythm of the day helps to “hold” the children as well and there is generally less need for disciplinary measures when a regular routine or rhythm is practiced. When disruptions or conflicts between the children occur, each child is given the freedom to express her needs while the teacher is near and listening. If guidance is needed, the teacher models positive conflict-resolution skills or uses creativity to redirect the situation.

You will be notified, and your child may be sent home, if they display repeated aggressive behavior or intense emotional upset such as biting, kicking, or tantrums. If your child is having difficulties with aggressive behaviors at school the lead teacher will notify you. If these behaviors begin to occur outside of school please confer with me immediately so that we can establish consistent methods of discipline both at home and at school. Above all, parents and teachers both strive to be a supportive working team.

MEDIA

At little Acorn we work carefully to support the development of the child physically, socially and emotionally. During these first critical years of development, children need human interaction, imaginative play and lots of physical movement. There is substantial and compelling research demonstrating the negative impact of electronic

media upon the neurological development of the child. We firmly request that Little Acorn parents agree to either severely filter or limit their child's exposure to certain media or media altogether during each programming week (television, movie or computer screens) so that the beauty of the work we do at Little Acorn and their connection time with you as parents is what fills them up and lives in them most.

We spend much time creating magical puppet shows and stories to enliven the imaginations of all the children attending Little Acorn School. When a child watches television the evening or morning before attending Little Acorn School, he or she has a much more difficult time engaging or creating play that comes from their own imagination. As well they can have trouble listening and following directions, listening to a story or watching the puppet show because his or her mind is already filled with the pictures she or he saw on a screen. We recognize that this ideal may be challenging for some families. However I am confident that we can work together on this very important issue. I am always available to support your family if you have questions or would like suggestions about healthy media habits. Typically it takes a little time for a child to get past the "I'm bored" stage if their media is reduced. But boredom surely breeds brilliance, invention, play and creativity!!!

COMMUNICATION

Good, open communication is a key element in the success of your child's education.

To facilitate good communication, this program includes:

- Occasional emails, texts and newsletters
- Parent –teacher conferences
- Quarterly parent evenings
- Monthly phone conversations (if requested)

In addition, limited exchanges of information about illness, accidents, disposition, etc. can be exchanged at drop off time in the mornings. Parents are expected to attend parent meetings, work with teachers as concerns or issues arise and communicate about challenging situations in your child's life. Please talk to me first if you have classroom-related questions, problems or concerns.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS/ SICK POLICY

Your child's health is important to us all. Please keep your child at home if they are ill. This protects the health of the entire group. If your child develops symptoms of illness during the day, we will contact you immediately. **I will contact a parent if, in my opinion, your child is unable to participate fully in a normal day, whether due to illness, fatigue or unusual distress. Children should be kept home if they are not completely well and rested.** Remember, it is important for young children to have 11-12 hours of sleep each night and to eat a healthy, protein-rich breakfast before coming to school.

STANDARD SICK POLICY

Please keep your child at home if he or she has:

- A fever, or has had one in the previous 24 hours
- Heavy nasal discharge (especially colored)
- A constant cough
- Vomiting or diarrhea (24 hr. exclusion applies)
- Symptoms associated with a communicable disease—reddened eyes, sore throat, headache, pain, rashes
- Any known contagious malady such as pinworms, head lice, pink eye, chicken pox, etc.

If your child develops a communicable disease, please contact me at once as it will be very important to alert other members of the class and I will do so in a gentle, compassionate manner.

COVID- 19 SYMPTOMS POLICY:

Little Acorn School utilizes the most recent CDC guidelines if a child or parent contracts COVID. Families are required to have their child tested if they are experiencing the symptoms below and/ or cold like symptoms. We recognize this is an inconvenience, however the comfort of all individuals and keeping our bubble safe is most important ! **families are required to keep their children home and get tested if they are experiencing COLD LIKE OR ANY of the following symptoms.** *Symptoms must be gone for a total of 3 days before returning to school grounds.*

- Fever
- New loss of taste or smell
- Cough Chills
- Difficulty breathing
- Shortness of breath

Parents are required to notify Little Acorn School immediately if they have been in contact with someone who tests positive for Covid-19. Those family members will be required to take the covid-19 test and may not return to school grounds until the results are returned as negative.

COVID-19 SCHOOL PROTOCOLS

What do I do if I or my child has tested positive for covid or have been in direct contact with someone that has? Parents are required to notify Little Acorn School immediately if they or anyone they have had recent direct contact with has tested positive for Covid-19. Each LAPK family member and child will be required to take a covid-19 test and submit results to Little Acorn School.

If the parent or child tests positive, they are required to follow the most current CDC guidelines. In the case of a child or parent testing positive, all Little Acorn families will need to be notified so that they may take appropriate action to get tested.

We always aim to protect each family's privacy. However our tiny community of families aims to support one another and you may opt to allow other families to know.

School Closures: If it is determined that an individual in our immediate school community has tested positive for Coronavirus and has been on school grounds since contracting the virus Little Acorn School will be forced to close. All parents, children and teachers will be required to take and submit to Little Acorn COVID test results. Families are asked to quarantine until they confirm their test results. Individuals must test negative and share their results with the school director prior to returning to school grounds.

Phase One- Stay at Home Order: Little Acorn will close indefinitely if N.C. state or Buncombe County returns to Phase 1 and issues a “stay at home order” and return to regular programming once lifted if we are within our scheduled calendar year.

Make-up weeks for closures:

For every 8 days that Little Acorn School is closed, one week will be added to the end of our school's calendar year. Up to the max of 2 weeks can be added.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WARMTH

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of dressing your children warmly. In the colder months of the year it is best if children wear wool long underwear and hats which cover their ears. We ask that if the temperature is below 60 degrees Fahrenheit, that you dress your child in silk or wool long underwear. Please communicate with me if you would like guidance about where to order these items. As a class, we will make a bulk order of “woolies” and “silgies” in the autumn, which you are welcome to be a

part of. In the autumn and spring I ask that you dress your child in layers that can provide for the changing weather patterns which can be met each day. As the Little Acorn School rhythm includes considerable time outdoors during every season and any kind of weather, I ask that you, dear parents, provide your child with clothing which will keep their growing bodies warm and cozy. In the early childhood years, the physical body and the brain are still building and forming. When the body is not dressed warmly, all the extra energy needed for forming the physical body healthily is taken up in working to keep the body warm. Let us work together to help the children thrive as they grow!

CLOTHING REQUIREMENTS.

In choosing school clothes and helping your child to get ready in the morning, please select clothing that is:

- Clothing without media on it. For example batman or spiderman t-shirts etc. Children tend to take on those characters very easily when they are at play in a program setting while wearing these items. We try to encourage their own imaginative play while at school so not wearing these items makes it much easier for this to occur.
- Easy to move in and loosen for the bathroom
- Able to withstand dirt, grass, water, paint(not too dressy)
- Layered for warmth and changeable weather
- Made from natural fibers for comfort
- Preferably of solid colors or soft prints and free from advertisements or media characters
- Labeled with your child's name
- Please send your child in full fitting, STURDY shoes for hiking and running.

Each child will have a basket, and hook where their jackets, shoes, etc. are kept during the day. Please check it regularly for things to be taken home. Please bring the following items from home and please clearly label them with your child's name.

***CUBBY ITEMS: Replenish as needed & change seasonally**

- *Indoor shoes- Non slip shoes, with a back that your child can put on and take off easily would be appropriate
- Rain gear – Please provide your child with highly functional rain pants, jacket and *rain boots. BOGS are a fabulous choice as they keep your child's feet warm and dry year round! *(Boots are either kept at school or worn to school daily).
- Sun Hat- If you would like your child to wear a sun hat, please provide one, and it is preferable that you apply sunscreen before you bring your child to school.

***Extra clothes-** Please provide a bag to stay at school with the correct number of seasonally appropriate clothing items, Number listed in () below.

- LATE SUMMER/LATE SPRING (2) short sleeved shirt, (1)long sleeved shirt, (2)shorts, (1)pants, (3)socks, (2)underwear and a (1) warm sweater.
- FALL/WINTER:
To be worn to school each day: Warm winter hat and mittens.
Once the weather cools below 55 degrees, it is required that each child wear or bring a warm hat and mittens every day.
 - If you have a few extra pairs it is VERY helpful to have a pair stay at school. If the mittens/ gloves are difficult to put on, we will help once your child arrives at school!

- WINTER

To be worn to school each day: Woolies/wool or silk long underwear.

Similar to a warm hat and mittens, we also ask that you provide long underwear that is made of natural fibers during the cooler months of the year. These natural fibers insulate your child even if he or she is wet and provide assurance that we can play outdoors in any kind of weather without getting cold.

ITEMS TO KEEP AT HOME:

We request parents help their children keep personal items like jewelry and toys at home. They can be distracting to our daily rhythm as well as challenging for a child if their special home item gets broken, or lost in our large play yard. If your child has something special and educational that they would like to share with their class please let Miss Jenny know. We can chat and arrange for that to happen as well as ensure the item is handled with care and returned safely to your family.

ABSENCES & PICK UP

ABSENCES:

To report an absence, please leave a phone message or text message on my phone. It is very helpful for me to know the reason and probable length of the child's absence.

ALTERNATIVE PICK UP:

If, for any reason, someone other than the parent or authorized adult will be picking your child up, please leave a written note or phone message. Also, please inform the adult to bring picture identification.

TUITION

Tuition is due 1 week prior to services rendered.

A late payment fee of \$35 dollars will be applied if payment is received 5 days late.

Families may pay online or place tuition inside the pocket of the “Parent Notes” book we have at drop off and pick up. (We will show you this book at orientation).

Cash and checks are accepted as well as Venmo or Paypal. Checks may be made out to Jennifer Brantley.

VISITING THE CLASSROOM

Visitors are welcome when advance arrangements are made with me. Visitors are generally given a quiet task to perform while joining the morning activities. Visitors include parents, grandparents or other family members, student teachers, my mentors and others interested in Waldorf Education.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS AT LITTLE ACORN

Celebrating your child’s birth at Little Acorn with their classmates is a sweet and memorable experience. We invite you to join us for our meal and story time. on either the day of their birth if it falls on a programming day or another day that is more convenient for your schedule. The exact time of your visit depends on our daily rhythm that school year. We welcome mothers, fathers together or separately. Grandparents are welcome to join you too. In the case that you are not able to attend, a grandparent of a very dear and special ADULT friend of your child is welcome to attend in your place.

On this special day we tell the rainbow bridge birthday tale and your child brings in a special birthday snack to share and enjoy with the whole group at snack time. To celebrate your child's years on this earth we ask you to bring in a few pictures (8 max) of your little one and share with us a magical memory from each year of your child's life since birth. Here are some examples, "When Joseph was one year old he took his first trip to the beach. When he was two years old he rode in a plane for his first time all the way to Mexico to visit... When Joseph was three our family got its first cat/dog..." Celebrating a birthday in this Waldorf way is a very beautiful experience and really makes the birthday child feel very special as they remember all the years together with you that they have been learning and growing.

We request the snack is gluten free snack and if it is to contain sugar that it be unrefined sugars (honey, agave, maple syrup etc) rather than processed white sugars. Please also check in with the allergies of your child's classmates. Perhaps your child has something you make that is their favorite or something you could purchase. If you need suggestions for recipes or store bought items please let me know. We are so excited to celebrate with you!

Birthday Blessings!

SCHOOL RULES

Our school rules are intended to make each child feel and remain safe, as well as maintain a safe environment and protect both feelings and physical bodies from harm. School rules may shift depending on what a class of children are learning and can handle safely together. Below are our very firm rules that do not change. Please help us enforce them to keep each child safe.

When it comes to learning the school rules we strive to redirect behaviors and say the behavior we want to see the child offer, instead of using the word "no" and being punitive in our language regarding the behavior a child is currently offering. We encourage parents to adopt this practice as well so that you may feel this positive and

powerful way of communicating an important lesson and so that we can be a supportive and positive team for your child.

1st example: If a child is poking another child with a stick or using it in a way that could be dangerous to their own body or that of another child's. Try saying "I see you have a stick that is in ___child's name___ body space. Sticks are used for digging and building..."

2nd example: If a child is attempting to stand up on their chair during snack or lunch. "Feet stay on the ground during snack and lunch."

BEHAVIORS AND PLAY WE DISCOURAGE:

Excluding others, name calling, hitting, pulling hair, biting. We take biting very seriously as the jaw can be very powerful. We take all of these very seriously, especially biting. We will help your child understand why these behaviors are not acceptable and may need to chat with the family of the child if behaviors persist. this one very seriously as the jaw can be very powerful.

-Talk/play related to media-

We strive for each child to enter into deep imaginative play here each day. We want to foster and see play that comes out of them, not a re-enactment of what they see on TV. Media can really inhibit children's play and reduce their ability to think up unique and creative ideas on their own. We gently redirect the conversations and play and if needed we may have to say that we don't talk about television shows etc at school.

-Gun play-

We *very much* discourage guns in the children's Play. If a child is using their hands in the shape of a gun in their play or fashioning a piece of wood or something to be like a gun in their play... We simply say "guns can hurt Someone. We don't have any guns in our play at school" or "we don't allow guns in our play at school".

RULES AROUND PHYSICAL PLACES AND STRUCTURES:

-Play yard-

The grass is our play area. The patio, furniture and hot tub is not for children to play on and the children learn this the first day and are reminded often if needed. They really tend to stay up on the grass where all the toys and fun things are :)).

-Fences-

Children are not to climb any of the fences.

-Parking Lot-

Children must be attended by an adult in the parking lot at all times. This can be their own parent or family assistant or another parent if given permission to drop off or pick-up. Please hold your child's hand while entering up to or exiting the school yard gates.

-Play yard gate-

This is for parents and teachers hands ONLY.

-Sticks-

Sticks are for digging and building. We discourage running with sticks or pointing them at another child's body.

-Swing-

Our tree swing has a very wide berth. Our swing has a bubble space around it just like we teach the children to think of other children's bodies and their own having it's own bubble space. This gives children a visual when learning to respect each other's body space and giving the swing space when it is in use.

-Fire pit-

To promote fire safety and safety around fire pits (hot or cold) we tell the children the fire pit is a sacred place and teach that hands, feet, and bodies stay out of the fire pit, even when there is no fire.

In the winter, if there is no wind, we occasionally have a little fire.
Only Teachers stoke Or tend the fire. Children get to enjoy it's gift of warmth

-Wooden Play structure-

No toys or sticks are to be thrown off the play structure.

-Slide-

Children's bodies go down the slide only. When the children become more aware of their physical body in this play yard space that rule tends to be more flexible.

Monster play- We are a mixed age school. Loud and scary sounding monster play can scare younger children. We encourage gentler games. We ask that scary and or “violent like” behavior stay out of the children’s play. We simply say “Let’s play a more gentler game.” Or “That game can go on holiday now, let’s play a more gentler game.”

WEATHER PROTOCOLS:

Please put the Buncombe County School Closure information hotline into the contacts of your phone : 828-255-5939

-CLOSURES: DUE TO WINTER WEATHER

We follow Buncombe County Schools for all closures due to winter weather. If Bunc Co. Schools close, we do too!

-DELAYS DUE TO WINTER WEATHER

We start at our normal 9am start time if Bunc. Co calls a 1-2 hr delay

THUNDER/LIGHTNING PROTOCOL:

We have rarely had to close due to thunder and lightning however, we are a nature based program and your child's safety is our number 1 priority.

In the event that we hear thunder we follow the 30/30 Rule and may have to call an early dismissal in the event there is dangerous thunder and lightning or high winds. We request families' support in being aware of the chance of thunderstorms for the day. The higher the probability of thunderstorms, the higher the chance the school could close early. Here is the link for the correct information on the 30/30 rule and how to determine how far away lightning is from a location.

<https://inotechnologies.com/correct-estimate-lightning-distance/>

-Here is another informative link to support our decisions for this protocol.

<https://www.weather.gov/safety/lightning-sports>

THUNDER/LIGHTNING PLAN OF ACTION:

Step 1.) If we hear thunder it means the storm is within 10 miles. In this case, we will notify all the families via group text to give them the chance to prepare themselves in the event that Little Acorn does need to close. At this time parents have the choice to pick up their child at the time of announcement.

Step 2.) If, as determined by the 30/30 rule, there is lightning within 8 miles and getting closer we will send a second alert via group text that school is closing and to come pick up your children as fast as possible.

Step 3.) In the event that lightning is determined to be within 6 miles we will bring any children that have not been picked up into our home for shelter and a story time until their parent(s) arrive.

NOTE: ***We would like to have a plan in place where if we as teachers cannot get in touch/ do not receive communication from a parent, that another family will be in charge of picking up the child of that unreachable family.

HIGH WIND PROTOCOL:

We have rarely had to close due to thunder and lightning or high winds however, we are a nature based program and your child's safety is our number 1 priority.

We request families support in being aware of the chance of a high wind alert in our area. Please familiarize yourself with the wind table presented here.

<https://www.weather.gov/pqr/wind>

HIGH WIND PLAN OF ACTION:

Step 1.) If winds are reported to be above 30 miles an hour during school hours we will notify all the families via group text to give them the chance to prepare

themselves in the event that Little Acorn does need to close. At this time parents have the choice to pick up their child at the time of announcement.

Step 2.) If winds are approaching 28 miles an hour we will send a second alert via group text that school is closing and to come pick up your children as fast as possible.

Step 3.) In the event that winds reach 30 mph we will bring any children that have not been picked up into our home for shelter and a story time until their parent(s) arrive.

Dear families,

Thank you for reviewing this handbook. It is really sacred to the work we do with your children. Once again, please do not hesitate to call or email me with questions or concerns that you may have as you prepare for your child's adventures at Little Acorn School!

Kindly,

Miss. Jenny and Mr. Joel