



**Family Handbook
2023-2024**

Basic Information

Great Oak School's Mission:

Great Oak School strives to balance the academic, artistic and practical realms of education while cultivating a lifelong love of learning and enthusiasm for life.

Physical Address:

715 Carrell Street
Tomball, TX 77375

Contact Information:

Phone number: 281.516.7296

Email address: info@greatoakschool.org

Emergency Contact:

Didianne Gilman at 281.516.7296

Email: didianne@greatoakschool.org

In the event of inclement weather, emergencies or last minute communications, Great Oak School uses *Remind* texting service to communicate to parents and anyone else involved in students' care. Great Oak School generally follows Tomball ISD in weather related school closures.

Office Hours:

7:45 am - 4:00 pm

School Hours:

8:00 am - 3:30 pm

Morning carline is from 8:00am - 8:10am

Afternoon carline is from 3:15pm - 3:30pm

Aftercare charges begin at 3:30 pm.

Extended Care Hours:

3:30 pm - 5:30 pm

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Non Discrimination Policy

Great Oak School is committed to complying with all applicable laws providing equal employment opportunities. GOS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity and/or sexual orientation), national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other category protected by federal, state or local law. GOS will not retaliate against a person because they complained about employment discrimination, filed a charge of employment discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit. This commitment applies to all persons involved in the operations of GOS, including employees and applicants.

Any GOS employee who is found to have engaged in unlawful harassment, discrimination, or retaliation is subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge from employment.

The following person has been designated to handle all inquiries regarding the school's nondiscrimination policies:

School Administrator
715 Carrell Street
Tomball, TX 77375

info@greatoakschool.org

Value Statement

Great Oak School acknowledges the social, structural, and economical inequities that exist in our society. We espouse and actively support principles of human dignity and social justice and see this work as being a moral and social imperative. Our curriculum carefully examines the past and imagines a more equitable future. We recognize the value of including a variety of cultures, experiences, opinions, perspectives, and life stories in our work. In every subject there is an effort to authentically reflect the lived experiences of our students, while introducing concepts and subjects that may be less familiar. The intention of this approach is to facilitate creative, free, discerning thought and action.

We are a school community where we expect that a person from any background and with any chosen future feels respected, safe, and loved. We stand with under-represented peoples and populations with the expectations that they, and everyone, enjoys dignity, freedom, and care in this community. We stand against prejudicial and/or fanatical behavior. If divergent worldviews happen to meet here, we expect acceptance and compassion in order to ensure tolerance and harmony.

We acknowledge that our school is located on the ancestral home of many indigenous peoples, specifically the Karankawa, Atakapa-Ishak, Tap Pilam Coahuiltecan, and Tonkawa Tribes/Peoples. We are grateful to be the joint stewards of this land and intend to imbue this space with consciousness and care in honor of this land's indigenous peoples.

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Welcome to the Early Childhood and Grades Program of Great Oak School. Great Oak School is in operation from August through May. Parents are always welcome at Great Oak School during operating hours for consultation with administration. Classroom visits and observation should be scheduled with the student's teacher.

We welcome you as a family to our school community and look forward to a strong partnership with you. This Handbook will be your guide to our programs, our policies and our philosophy of education. It contains suggestions for making your family's experience here a warm and successful one. We are pleased that you have chosen to send your child to our school. The curriculum of Great Oak School differs in some ways from that of other schools. We, therefore, encourage you to read this Handbook completely.

a. School Hours

Great Oak School is in operation from 8:00 am to 3:30PM

- Grades and Early Childhood classes begin at 8:10am but students will be expected to arrive via carline between 8:00 and 8:10am for a prompt 8:10 class start.
- Dismissal for Grades students is 3:15 pm.
- Dismissal for EC students is 12:15 or 3:15 pm (dependent upon program).
- Except for half-day students, all students will be picked up using our carline which runs between 3:15 and 3:30 pm (except Fridays which will be park and pick-up).
- Aftercare charges begin at 3:30 pm. Pick up time from Aftercare is 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm. Any pick up later than 5:30 pm will likely incur a fee and must be an extreme rarity.

b. Student Drop Off and Pick Up

It is important that children arrive at school on time each morning as this rhythm carries them through the day. Please contact the office if there is an unavoidable delay in arrival of 15 minutes or more. Students arriving after the carline must check in through the office before the student may proceed to class. **We do ask that parents and siblings stay outside the classroom (play yards are considered classrooms) to allow for safe supervision of the children in the school's care.**

The children in the half day EC program may be picked up at 12:15 pm for Preschool and Kindergarten. Upon pick up, the child must be signed out before leaving campus. A nap time assessment is required for all children seeking enrollment for our full-time program. Children who are unable to nap or rest quietly will not be granted enrollment for a full day.

For your child's safety, it is our policy to dismiss a child only to the parent or authorized pickup person indicated on release forms. Any change in the usual pick up procedure should be communicated in writing to the school office.

Early Childhood Program

c. Extended Hours: Aftercare

Kindergarten (when teacher approved) and Grades students are eligible for Aftercare when enrolled at Great Oak School.

i. Aftercare begins daily after 3:30 pm and continues until 5:30 pm. Children not picked up at dismissal will be walked over by his/her teacher and signed in to Aftercare. Aftercare charges begin 15 minutes beyond dismissal time. Aftercare meets in the Kindergarten Playground. Upon arrival, the child will be welcomed and seated for a snack sent from home. After snack time, children will have the option for free play or a provided project. All children must be picked up

and signed out from Aftercare by or before 5:30 pm.

2. SCHOOL POLICIES

a. Student Dress Code

We appreciate you following these guidelines, but also note that the ultimate decision on student dress is at the discretion of faculty.

The Importance of Warmth:

We all know that if children are to grow into happy, healthy individuals, it is essential to wrap them in the warmth of our love. For the young child physical warmth is just as important. Children are developing their bodies during the first seven years of their lives. During this time, they have not yet fully developed their sense of warmth and may not realize when they are cold. When this happens, energy that should be going to build healthy organs is expended in heating the body. Being cold (for children of any age) can also decrease immunity and make them more susceptible to germs and viruses. By dressing our children in layers of natural fabrics such as cotton, wool, and silk, we help them develop their sense of warmth, thus strengthening their immunity and laying the foundation for healthy bodies and healthy organs in adult life.

Plain Clothes Dress Code:

Our school has a plain-clothes dress code to support teachers in creating a calm, aesthetic learning environment. Part of our curriculum is in the direct experience of nature, and our students go outdoors and have direct experience of all kinds of weather. Please be sure that your child is dressed each day in layers appropriate to the weather of the season. *There is no bad weather, only inappropriate clothing.* In general, student dress and appearance should not be distracting and should reflect:

- Neatness, cleanliness, and modesty
- Appropriateness for weather
- Respect for self and others

If clothing draws a reaction from others, it is probably inappropriate. If a child's behavior changes in a certain type of clothing, it is probably inappropriate. When purchasing or making children's clothing, keep in mind that some styles draw the child out of the protected world of childhood into a premature awareness of their appearance. When in doubt, choose sturdy, serviceable, plain garments that stand up to rugged outdoor play. Expect mud!

For young children, please dress your child in clothing that is comfortable, uncomplicated and easy for the child to manage at bathroom time - a great confidence booster. Please avoid any clothing that might hinder the young child from being self-sufficient and/or to play heartily.

We are a school where we want individuality to blossom, but we also recognize the need to have some helpful parameters on clothing so that everyone is safe and learning at school. It is to those ends that we offer this list of 'YES's' and 'NO's' for our dress code.

Grades 3 and Below Dress Code YES'S:

- Plain clothing - solids, stripes, small patterns, small imagery
- Closed toe shoes (rain boots at school)
- Weather appropriate attire
- Shorts and dresses that come to mid-thigh

- Shorts worn under dresses
- Age appropriate, non-distracting jewelry
- Sun hats and warm hats as the weather dictates
- Weather related outerwear - generally kept at school

Grades 3 and Below Dress Code NO'S:

- Images that incorporate advertising, media characters/references, large images
- Distracting images and/or textures (such as large patches of sequins, fur, etc.).
- Watches of any kind (this will change during the 3rd grade year)
- Swimsuits, leotards, or dance wear except for planned events
- Exposed backs, bellies, bottoms, and/or extensive bare skin
- Torn or ripped clothing
- Open toe, flimsy shoes such as flip-flops or crocs

Grades 4 and Above Dress Code YES'S:

- Neat, clean, and modest attire
- Athletic shoes appropriate for all movement activities (rain boots at school)
- Weather appropriate attire
- Shorts and dresses that come to mid-thigh
- Age appropriate jewelry
- Sun hats and warm hats as the weather dictates
- Weather related outerwear - generally kept at school

Grades 4 and Above Dress Code NO'S:

- Exposed backs, bottoms, bellies, chests and/or excessive bare skin
- Distracting hairstyles and/or makeup
- Advertising imagery
- Lewd, violent, offensive imagery
- Open toe, flimsy shoes such as flip-flops or crocs
- High heeled shoes
- Smart watches/wrist-worn tech of any kind

We recognize the inherent and natural need of middle school students to individuate which may often be represented in clothing, hair, jewelry and other style choices. The faculty and administration will be respectful of this developmental need while upholding the basic values of our dress code.

Please note that there may be exceptions to the dress code for some on and off campus school sponsored events.

b. Absences

In a Waldorf school, each lesson block is carefully designed, allowing learning to take place in a balanced way. Given the breadth of the curriculum, even a few days missed of class can adversely affect your child's education. The lesson block rhythm is disrupted, and missed work cannot always be made up. It is very important you consider the effects of an absence and tardiness upon your child. By promoting regular and punctual attendance, we allow the child to

experience the full lesson.

Early Childhood Program

Punctual, regular attendance provides a reliable rhythm and establishes healthy habits for the young child. Even though our youngest students do not work at a desk, their full participation in the school day is vital in order to benefit from the Waldorf curriculum. Regular attendance fosters a child's well being, a sense of belonging, and strengthens their relationship with their classmates and their teacher. Being on time means they start their day with their classmates and teacher, rather than arriving into a class already in progress. Please help your children make the most of the day by bringing them to school on time.

Absences:

We strongly request that absences are communicated to the teacher and/or administration via email or phone.

Unplanned absences:

If your child needs to be absent from school due to illness or for any other unplanned reason, please call or email the office and your child's teacher as soon as possible in the morning.

Planned absences:

- We request that a planned absence is communicated to teachers with a reasonable amount of notice for any needed planning.
- When making plans for future vacations, please keep in mind what is best for your child. Please support regular attendance by planning your trips to coincide with Great Oak School's scheduled breaks.

Excessive absences:

- Two or more absences per month or
- 10 absences total for the year

In cases of excessive and/or unexcused absences, the class teacher may request a conference with the parents. In extreme cases in which a child has missed a significant portion of the program, the class teacher will go over the circumstances, and may determine that the child's year at GOS cannot be fully supported.

The faculty strongly encourages parents to do whatever they can to promote good health so that the child is able to attend school. A lot happens in one day and it can be difficult for a child to make up what has been covered. We do encourage sick children to stay home and rest. To further promote health and reduce absences, we also recommend healthy meals, appropriate clothing, minimal amounts of media exposure, and early bedtimes.

Tardies:

We know that it is important for a student's social and academic health to be at school on time so that the class may commence the day as a group with few interruptions. For these reasons, we strongly encourage timeliness in your arrival at school to support your child(ren), the class and your class teacher. For these reasons, we will follow the guidelines:

- More than 10 tardies will likely result in an email from the administration as a reminder.
- More than 20 tardies will likely result in a contact from the administrator to see what support may be helpful for future timeliness.
- If a student is tardy more than 25 times, a meeting with parents, administration and the class teacher will likely be planned to create a plan of expectation.

c. Illnesses

In general, please keep your child home if he/she is ill. When children are recovering from an illness, they should be kept at home until they have completely recovered their health. When they return to school too quickly they have often not regained all of their strength sufficiently and may relapse, becoming more ill than they were originally. If your child is going to be absent due to illness please let us know your child's symptoms so we may be attentive to the development of these symptoms in classmates.

Children with any of the following symptoms should remain at home:

- Fever 100° or above
- Diarrhea/vomiting
- Deep or persistent cough
- Rash
- Any infectious condition including Covid 19
- The school may choose to send a child home who is exhibiting signs of illness.

COVID-19 - Until otherwise noted, IF your child tests positive for COVID-19, we require that you notify the office immediately and the child stays home for a minimum of 5 days. Your child may return to school 5 days after the onset of symptoms and after at least 24 hours of being completely symptom free without the use of medication of any kind.

Children should remain at home until they are symptom-free for 24 hours without using any medication to reduce or suppress symptoms.

If a child is diagnosed with a specific virus or illness, including Covid-19, please notify the administration as soon as possible since we have a responsibility to notify the state health department in certain circumstances.

If a child becomes ill while at school, parents will be contacted to pick up their child immediately. The school does not have facilities to care for children who become ill. The school staff is only permitted to administer internal medicine with written parental permission and written instructions from a medical professional.

d. Lice

Infestation may affect children from all socio-economic groups and has nothing to do with cleanliness. Many schools have occasional outbreaks of lice. To prevent outbreaks, we recommend that parents do a weekly head lice check at home. Great Oak School has a nit (louse egg) free policy. An infested child has the potential to infest his/her family, classmates, and siblings in other classes. If your child has become infested, notify the administration at once. Information on head lice and various treatment options from the State Health Department can be found in the office. A staff member may check your child for lice or nits. If lice or nits are found in a student's hair while at school, the student will be sent home. Your child may return to class when they are lice and nit free.

e. Medication

Parental permission is completed via TADS for the approval of administering all medication. All medication should remain in the original container.

Prescription medication - The school staff is only permitted to administer prescription medication with written parental permission and written instructions from the student's medical professional, which specify the medication's use including dosage and time(s) to be administered.

Non-prescription medication (including supplements) - The school staff may only administer non-prescription medication with written parental instructions that include use, dosage, and time(s) to be administered.

Please keep in mind that teachers do not have time to manage medication schedules for all students. Please administer medications and supplements at home whenever possible.

Please note that sunscreen and bug repellent are available to be used during the school day. Students will be guided on appropriate sunscreen and bug repellent application, but a teacher may need to assist in covering areas not covered by clothing or hats. We ask that sunscreen and bug repellent are applied each day before children arrive at school, and that parents supply their preferred bug spray and sunscreen for their child at the beginning of the year for re-application when needed. We also have generic bug spray and sunscreen available in each class.

f. Food Policy

Great Oak School strives to create a nurturing and healthy school environment to facilitate the growth and development of the whole child. Eating well balanced and healthy meals provide fuel for children's bodies and minds to work, learn, and play. It is important that all food sent from home be healthful and nourishing.

An ideal meal sent from home would contain protein, carbs, and healthy fats. Please send a reusable bottle containing only water to drink.

Children often enjoy:

- fresh fruits and vegetables
- dips such as hummus, guacamole, or dressing
- sandwiches with lunch meat, seed butter and fruit, cheese, etc.
- sliced cheese
- pickles and olives
- soup or leftovers in a thermos to keep them warm

Snacks and Lunches sent to school should **NOT** contain the following:

- chewing gum
- overly sugary or highly processed foods (chocolate, candy, cookies etc)
- foods that require preparation by the teacher (example: heating a meal in a microwave/oven/stove)
- Nuts due to multiple allergies
- foods that contain non natural food coloring
- juice or juice boxes

Items included in but not limited to this list may be removed from the child's lunch/snack at the teachers' discretion.

Aftercare Snacks:

The children work and play hard during school and are often hungry for a snack once their regular school day is over. If your child is attending aftercare please provide an additional snack to be eaten during that time. Clearly marking this snack as their aftercare snack can help children refrain from eating it during their school day. Please ensure that this snack is also healthful and allergen friendly.

Special Occasions:

There are times, such as birthday celebrations, class plays, holiday celebrations etc, where parents may be invited to provide a snack for the class to share. The faculty welcomes fruit and/or vegetable trays for those celebrations. Please speak with your child's teacher for guidance regarding other possible class treats to ensure class allergies and Great Oak food policies are recognized.

Food Allergies:

Special food allergies may exist in individual classes that could require additional food restrictions. Your child's teacher will let you know if this is the case.

g. Allergies

Any child with allergies or medication dispensation needs should inform Great Oak School upon enrollment. A written allergy or medication plan must be on file with the school. This plan must include steps of action and be signed by a medical professional and parent(s).

h. Injuries at School

In the event of scraped knees, bruises, splinters, or scratches, the office staff or teacher will tend to the wound and will provide an incident report to the parent within 24 hours if additional First Aid care is provided beyond a bandage or ice. For more serious injuries, the parent will be called and an incident report will be written up and presented to the parent. The school can only administer topical, oral, or homeopathic medication if the parent has granted written permission on the Permit to Administer Medication form (available on TADS). In the event of a medical emergency, the school will attempt to contact parents/guardians and will take the child to a hospital as indicated on the emergency information form, submitted at enrollment.

i. Immunizations

Each Great Oak student must remain current on his/her vaccinations (unless an exemption is relevant and supplied). Each child must have completed health and immunization forms *and/or* exemption forms on file with the office prior to admission. This is a requirement of the county health department and state law.

Texas law provides for two exemptions from immunizations: (1) Medical exemption in which a licensed physician certifies in writing that an immunization may be detrimental to a person's health. (2) Reasons of conscience. Families must submit a notarized state form, after which point the child may attend school without presenting a certificate of immunization. More information can be found at: <https://webds.dshs.state.tx.us/immco/affidavit.shtm>. Per state law, children will not be admitted to school on the first day without their immunization forms or their statements of exemption. Please refer to your immunization paperwork in your enrollment packet.

j. Hearing and Vision Screenings

All children four years of age and older are required to provide documentation showing a vision and hearing screening has been completed by a physician. This documentation is due, along with the annual physician's wellness statement, at the beginning of each school year by the first day of school or the first day of school for a new student.

k. Media

For our purposes, media are considered to include: television, radio, movies, video and computer games, including hand-held devices, computers, tablets and cell phones.

Great Oak School is dedicated to nurturing each child's capacities for imagination, healthy emotional development, independent thinking and positive action. In recognizing the harmful effects that media have on the development of these capacities, teachers request that parents eliminate weekday exposure to media and strongly restrict weekend usage. Media images go into the child's sleep and carry over into the next day. At this critical developmental stage, electronic media undermines the healthy development of the eye and of speech. It is especially important in a world of constant media that the child is protected whenever possible and thus a media-free home life is ideal. As need be, the teachers will assist by providing recommendations about how to carry this out. If a child disturbs the healthy classroom atmosphere due to a lax media policy at home, this diminishes the learning experience for all and will be managed by the faculty and administration.

More detailed reasons include:

- Need for healthy interaction: Our teachers strive to present the most interactive education possible, and that means "interactive" with real human beings, not machines or virtual humans. We urge families to adopt this learning-through-human-beings approach at home as well. Media use tends to isolate and prevent the development of social skills. When children watch television, use a computer, or play electronic games, these activities are substitutes for interacting with real adults and children, hearing and creating live music and/or stories, and working with hands and limbs.
- Need for healthy imitation: The way in which people and characters relate to one another in television programs, movies, and software/video games can interfere with the child's healthy social development. As children are highly imitative, it is therefore highly undesirable for them to be exposed to argumentative talk shows, the snide rhetoric of sitcoms, unhealthy gender roles, stereotypes, etc.
- Need for healthy storytelling, person to person: These electronic mediums also conflict with the core of our teaching approach itself. In our school, the teacher delivers lessons through stories and the child needs to be able to live in the story to learn. The teacher relies on the engagement of the child's subconscious mind in sleep to deepen connections with the curriculum presented via story. (If media images interfere, that fertile field of the sleep life is supplanted with quick-editing images instead, and the value of the educational approach is seriously undermined.)
- Need for healthy movement: The passivity and lack of movement while using computers, playing electronic games and watching television or movies is unnatural for children, who would naturally otherwise be moving, and transitioning easily between active and quiet play. Excessive electronic media exposure can quickly train children to be still only when "plugged in". Our teachers observe differences in the ability to concentrate in school between students who have more and less screen media in their non-school hours.
- Need for peaceful interaction: American television and film are known throughout the world as lucrative businesses that promote violence. The average television-watching child sees 16,000 murders on TV by age 18, according to the American Psychological Association, and evening "news" programs hold some of the most disturbing images for children. The child experiences these acts very differently and with great feeling compared with the average "desensitized" adult.
- Need for expanding the child's imagination: A child who watches television (especially the same show or video repeatedly) may become "stuck" during creative play time and recesses, unable to play anything but a superhero or "emergency." When children are trained to "being entertained", they can quickly exhibit an inability to cope with the quiet times of working on projects or just letting their imaginations wander while waiting their turn at something. When a child is making "white noise" or fidgeting or "singing out" in their insecurity with silence, it can be a sign of this problem of engaging the child's inner resources. Recent developmental studies support our position that it is the imagination that provides the foundation for learning, growth, creativity, and even love.

- Need to foster a healthy attention span: Many teachers observe that the children in their classes who are exposed to daily electronic media cannot focus on simple tasks or the oral narrative that is so delightful to their classmates. The attention of these children wanders at the same time that other students are the most engaged. The ability to focus for a sustained period is fostered by working on a real project and attending to real human beings.
- Need to develop free and critical thinking: Advertising (which even finds its way into the content of program plots these days) is directed at children to create in them a “need” for the product. Children are conditioned to want, to purchase, and to compete in the acquisition of material things. This is antithetical to the core purpose of our educational approach, which is to foster free thinking human beings.
- Need for reflection versus quick response: In the information age, children need to develop the ability to digest and reflect upon the stimulation that swirls all around them. Most electronic media use encourages quick responses (especially computers and video games), or requires that the child follow quickly edited material rather than real-time experience.

5th Grade and Down Media YES’S:

- For multi-parent/home households, any electronic device that must be transported from one home to another mid-week (must be OFF and PACKED away)
- Moderate, age-appropriate, well-chosen media on weekends (more information on this will be shared with you by your class teacher)
- Audio books
- FaceTime/Zoom/Google Meet with friends and/or relatives
- Audio communication
- Remedial media tools (as pre-arranged with faculty)

5th Grade and Down Media NO’S:

- Screen time/media time on school nights
- Cell phones (unless the multi-family situation exists - see the ‘YES’ list)
- Smart watches/worn electronics
- Texting or emailing classmates and/or teachers - parents may communicate electronically as needed
- Tablets or other electronic devices

6th, 7th and 8th Grades Media YES’S:

- Cell phones may come to school but must be OFF and in backpacks *
- Laptops/tablets as needed and requested by a teacher (rarely in 7th grade and occasionally in 8th grade)
- Electronics that may be used for remedial purposes or other classroom purposes as defined, approved and/or requested by a teacher
- Moderate, age-appropriate, well-chosen media on weekends (more information on this will be shared with you by your class teacher).
- Audio books
- FaceTime/Zoom/Google Meet with friends and/or relatives
- Audio communication
- Remedial media tools (as pre-arranged with faculty)

6th, 7th and 8th Grades Media NO’S:

- Smart watches/worn electronic devices
- Texting or emailing classmates or teachers before 8:00am and/or after 8:00pm.
- While we suggest and strongly encourage no screen time on school nights, we request no

more than one hour of age appropriate, constructive screen/media time any given school night

*Occasional permission may be granted by a teacher for cell phone use.

Photography & Videography:

Great Oak School has committed to videoing and photographing school plays and other important events held on campus. We want parents and loved ones to be fully present and enjoy these special moments. Photos and videos (event specific) will be shared via a link where families can access and download the media. **We are asking for no personal recording or photography to take place during these events.** If Great Oak School photography or videography is not available at an event, we will let families know.

Children & Self-image:

We ask parents not to show children themselves on video; these videos are meant for adults. Children are, rightfully, very proud of themselves after their class play (or anytime they perform), and they have a very clear picture in their mind of their role in that performance. Showing a child what they actually looked like on stage can shake that budding self-confidence and cause self-doubt and negative self-thoughts to creep in, no matter how wonderfully they performed. We recognize that this request may seem unorthodox, but protecting children's sense of self is paramount in Waldorf Education.

Social Media:

Please be mindful of sharing photos and videos that contain other people's children. Media images taken by Great Oak School and shared with the school community are intended for personal use only and not for use on social media. Great Oak School will post event pictures to our public social media accounts that we encourage you to share.

I. Discipline

Each classroom will have variations in discipline policy and enforcement based on student age and unique circumstances.

Grades students are expected to:

- Come prepared to learn.
- Follow the instructions of the teacher, other Great Oak School staff and authorized volunteers.
- Respect oneself, classmates, GOS staff and volunteers, school property, property of the church and personal property.
- Strive for honesty.

Waldorf teachers use several methods of preventative discipline, which may include:

- Clear expectations and mutually generated behavioral goals.
- Therapeutic storytelling.
- A strong daily rhythm in the classroom to lower anxiety and prevent confusion.
- Verbal and non-verbal communication including honest conversations with student and/or class.
- Positive reinforcement.
- Humor.
- Supporting that the child has adequate sleep and a healthy diet.
- A school-wide no media policy.

In cases involving behavior that adversely affects the classroom environment and limits other students learning opportunities, Great Oak School staff may implement additional measures, including, but not limited to:

- Temporary separation or removal from the class.
- One on one time or work with a teacher, assistant, or other authorized personnel. Community service.
- Using our change of environment approach for a child to reset in a different class.
- Revoking privileges such as participation in field trips.
- Parent teacher conferences.
- Early or temporary exclusion from school. (The procedure for early and temporary dismissal is described in more detail below. Please note that repeated temporary dismissal can result in permanent dismissal.)

Where the above measures have not been effective, the teachers and parents will work together to explore other options, which may include:

- Recommendations for medical, behavioral, and/or learning assessments and/or therapies. These can be accessed privately or through Tomball ISD.
- Recommendation for a one-to-one aide in the classroom.

It is Great Oak's sincere intention and hope that our students will thrive through the collaborative work of teachers, parents, and support personnel. In some cases however, parents and staff may mutually conclude that a student would be better served in another educational setting, in which case, Great Oak School will assist in the transition.

Bullying Statement:

We recognize that a level of unkind behaviors will be a part of childhood interactions and we do our utmost, through our discipline tools, our curriculum and classroom culture, to minimize these unpleasant exchanges. When we observe and/or become aware of behavior that has become more targeted and intense, therefore possibly being experienced as bullying, we work to restore and resolve these issues immediately. If this should occur, parent, teacher and administrative communication and collaboration is imperative to quickly address the issue toward a satisfactory resolution. In this situation, parents may expect a thorough conversation with the teacher and administrator that would be followed by a specific and measurable plan to address and alter the behavior within a reasonable time frame depending on the students' age range. A satisfactory resolution would include clear indicators from teachers and parents that the behavior has altered to an acceptable and healthy level through our restorative practices. We recognize that this process will depend upon communication, trust and the dependence upon a large scope of parent and student expectations that are detailed through this handbook.

Early or Temporary Exclusion from School

Student Behavior:

An incident for the purposes of this procedure, is any event in which a child intentionally injures or attempts to injure a child (including himself) or an adult, damages property during school hours, or engages in disruptive or disrespectful behavior. Incidents are identified at the teacher's discretion.

Procedure:

First incident: Teacher writes and signs an incident report. Teacher or administrator calls parents to pick up their child. Parent must sign the incident report. The incident report is filed in the student's file. Child goes home and may be asked to stay home the next school day.

Second incident: Teacher writes and signs an incident report. Teacher or administrator calls parents to pick up their child. Parent must sign the incident report. The incident report is filed in the student's file. Child goes home and may be asked to stay home the next school day. Teacher will likely initiate a conversation with parents about the child's behavior.

Third incident: Teacher writes and signs an incident report. Teacher or administrator calls parents to pick up their child. Parent must sign the incident report. The incident report is filed in the student's file. Child goes home and may be asked to stay home for up to three school days. A mandatory meeting is held with the teacher, parent, and a third party chosen by teacher (this may be necessary prior to the child returning to school). Clear communication may be given in writing to the parents indicating that continued behavior may result in expulsion. Parent signs a statement acknowledging the possibility of enrollment termination if behavior continues.

Fourth incident: Teacher writes and signs an incident report. Teacher or administrator calls parents to pick up their child. Parent must sign the incident report. The incident report is filed in the student's file. Child goes home and stays home for up to five school days. Mandatory meeting is held with the teacher, parent, and a third party chosen by the teacher before a child is allowed to return to school. Teacher issues warning that if the behavior continues, the child will be asked to permanently leave the school. Parent signs report with statement acknowledging impending termination of enrollment.

Fifth incident: Teacher writes and signs an incident report. Teacher or administrator calls parents to pick up their child. Parent must sign the incident report. The incident report is filed in the student's file. Parent attends a mandatory meeting with the teacher or administrator upon pick up. Student and/or family may be asked not to return.

The following circumstances may constitute grounds for immediate dismissal:

- violence or aggression
- illegal activity
- parent's refusal to sign an incident report
- parent's refusal to schedule a meeting
- parent's refusal to attend a meeting

Great Oak School reserves the right to skip or accelerate steps in this procedure, as it deems appropriate. Great Oak School reserves the right to terminate enrollment at any time.

Parent Behavior:

A child's enrollment will be revoked as a result of repeated parent misconduct or disregard for Great Oak School rules and policies as defined in this handbook. As in all realms, this is a collaborative decision among the Faculty and the Board of Trustees.

Parents are an integral part of our community. Great Oak is dependent on the support of parent volunteers that selflessly contribute to our vibrant community life. The members of our community deserve respect, and therefore Great Oak reserves the right to revoke or deny enrollment based on the behavior of parents. Expectations for parent behavior include:

- Upholding the communication policy (detailed later in this handbook): Great Oak expects every community member to take responsibility for healthy communication practices. The communication policy is clearly stated in the Communications section of this handbook. Please familiarize yourself with this policy.
- Respecting the privacy of other students and families: Please do not share personal information without permission of the person or people concerned. If you have a concern that needs to be addressed, please follow our communication policy by approaching the

- family concerned, the child's teacher, or a member of Listening Council.
- Respecting healthy personal boundaries of Great Oak community members.

Please respect the privacy and personal time of teachers, administrators, assistants, board members, and community volunteers of Great Oak School. Great Oak school does not condone sexual harassment, racism, religious or cultural insensitivity, or bullying of or by its community members. (Please see the Emergency and Safety section of this handbook.)

- Honoring and supporting school rules: Great Oak expects parents to comply with and support school rules, including discipline and attendance policies. (Please see the School Policy section of this handbook.)
- Compliance with the law: Great Oak expects parents to follow and support local, state, and federal laws. Handguns and other weapons are not allowed on campus. Great Oak employees are obligated by law to report suspected child negligence and abuse, which includes leaving an unattended child in a car. Great Oak will not release students to a driving parent or guardian showing signs of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol. (Please see the Emergency and Safety section of this handbook.)

m. Enrollment

Admission Policies & Process:

New students are welcome at any time during the school year, providing a space is available. Admission at any grade level is based on space availability, the student's age and an assessment that addresses the student's needs on several levels including physical, emotional and intellectual development. Currently enrolled students moving from preschool to kindergarten and from kindergarten to first grade are also assessed. Students may be assessed at additional times as necessary.

Age Requirements:

To be admitted to preschool, a child should have turned three and be potty trained. To be admitted to grade one, a student should have turned six by June 1 of the calendar year in which they will be starting grade one. Children born in May are considered to be "on the cusp". Parents should be aware that children "on the cusp" may be interviewed by more than one teacher to determine the best placement. The birth dates above serve as a guideline, however the ultimate decision will lie with the enrollment/assessment committee.

In grades two through eight, students are assessed to determine the appropriate grade level.

Admission Process:

At Great Oak School the admissions process consists of the following steps:

- 1) Attend a school tour.
- 2) Completion of an online application via TADS with a non-refundable \$100 application fee for each applicant.
- 3) Admissions Interview: Parent(s) will be contacted to schedule an interview by the appropriate teacher. We strongly encourage both parents to attend. This interview is an opportunity for parents and teachers to exchange pertinent information.
- 4) Grades Student Admissions Visit: Grades applicants will be invited to spend between 5 and ideally 10 days in the class to which they have applied. This visit is scheduled pending the result of the admissions interview.
- 5) Preschool and Kindergarten (EC) Admissions Visit: EC applicants will be invited to visit their respective class for 1, 2 or 3 mornings. This visit is scheduled pending the result of the admissions interview.
- 6) Notification of Acceptance: Parents are notified by phone or email of the admission decision as soon as possible following the visit. Upon acceptance, you will receive an invitation to

complete enrollment through TADS via email.

7) Completion of enrollment forms and payment of \$500 non-refundable enrollment deposit finalizes enrollment. A completed tuition agreement is due within five days after acceptance to secure a space in the class for your child. Financial questions may be addressed to our Finance Director, Zuzana Leckova at finance@greatoakschool.org. School and state laws dictate that all enrollment forms must be returned to the school prior to a student attending class.

Disclaimer: Great Oak School is designed as a general educational program for Pre-k through Grade 8. Though we do not discriminate based on specific learning or any other disabilities, it is important to note that Great Oak School does not currently employ remedial or other "Special Education" teachers, nor do we offer specific remedial or special classes or therapies of any kind, including Occupational Therapy, Speech Services, or other types of individual therapeutic services. Teachers will schedule accommodations to allow for parents and students to access outside special services during the school day.

We evaluate our ability to meet a child's needs strictly on a case by case basis and make recommendations accordingly. We may provide informal, teacher-administered screenings or informal assessments to determine if further professional assessment is needed.

In those situations, it may be incumbent upon the parents to engage outside testing/assessment services through school districts or through other private avenues should your child require that, and parents will be expected to follow through, communicating results of such assessments with Great Oak School faculty for the best possible outcome for the student. In a few situations, we have found that Great Oak School may not be the ideal environment to meet the specific needs of a given child, and we communicate those determinations with you, partnering with you to work for the best possible outcome for the child.

Tuition Assistance:

The tuition assistance application process is separate from the admissions process. Eligibility for assistance is based on documented financial need as determined by a third party, TADS. The financial aid committee will not award tuition assistance in an amount greater than 50% of tuition. Because of the 50% limit, it is very important that our families are able to demonstrate that they can sustain enrollment year to year within the parameters of our tuition assistance program. Therefore, we must consider whether a family qualifies to pay 50% of the annual tuition and fees when reviewing a student aid application. In order to receive tuition assistance, it is important that you follow the instructions and submit your application along with all required documentation as soon as possible after acceptance and ideally before April 1. Tuition assistance awards are made only after your child has been accepted to the school. Tuition assistance is available to kindergarten and grades students. GOS designates a portion of its annual budget as tuition assistance. Once available tuition assistance for the year is awarded, any subsequent requests may be reduced. (for more information please see the Tuition Assistance section)

n. Enrollment Changes

Change of Enrollment Process:

Once a change of enrollment is requested by a family or recommended by a class teacher (change from half to full days, or from full days to half days), the administration is notified by the parent or by a class teacher. A Change of Enrollment Form is then completed and signed by the family, the class teacher and the Administrator. The Finance Director adjusts billing in TADS to reflect the enrollment change.

Withdrawal Process:

To be eligible for a tuition refund, 30-day written notice with a completed withdrawal form to the administration is required for all withdrawals. The period of the 30-day written notice begins with the receipt of the completed and signed withdrawal form. Once submitted, the withdrawal form is signed by the teacher and the administrator. The Finance Director will process a refund through TADS. TADS issues a refund payable back to the family in the same form of the original payment. Application fee, facility & festival fee and supply fee are non-refundable. The withdrawal form completed by the family is necessary to stop any billing beyond the 30-day notice date. Student records and teacher recommendations/evaluations will be released only after financial obligations are paid in full.

Students that have withdrawn must reapply if they wish to return to Great Oak School.

Closure or Modification of School:

If the School is impacted by events beyond its control, including, but not limited to, fire, act of God, hurricane, tornado, flood, extreme inclement weather, explosion, war, governmental action, act of terrorism, risk of infectious illness, epidemic, pandemic, shortage or disruption of necessary utilities (water, electricity, etc.), force majeure events, or any other event beyond the School's control, the School has discretion to close the School and/or modify its curriculum, schedules, length of school day, length of school year, and/or means of learning and teaching methods. The family's contractual financial obligations to the School, including but not limited to tuition and fees, remain in full force and effect. If such an event occurs, the School's duties and obligations will be suspended immediately without notice until such time as the School, in its sole discretion, may safely reopen. In the event that the School cannot reopen due to an event under this clause, the School is under no obligation to refund any portion of the tuition or fees paid or relieve future tuition or fee payment obligations.

3. EMERGENCY AND SAFETY

a. General Safety Precautions

Great Oak School takes the safety of our students and staff seriously and we follow best practices to do all we can to provide a safe and secure learning environment. In addition to the drills and practices detailed below to address specific situations, we do the following:

- Lock ALL external doors and gates at all times.
- Require all visitors to come to the front office before entering the school building or engaging with a class activity.
- Ask visitors to wear a visitor's badge.
- All faculty, staff and volunteers complete a thorough background check through the Texas Department of Health and Human Services.
- Administration and faculty stay up to date on safety best practices.
- All lead administrative and teaching staff complete CPR and first aid training annually.
- We maintain a close working relationship with our local emergency response services.
- In the very rare circumstances that we would need to evacuate the school premises, we will communicate via social media, email and Remind text services the location of our evacuation.

b. Fire Drills

Great Oak School conducts monthly fire drills during the school day. In the event of an actual fire or fire drill, the Administrator makes a school wide announcement (via walkie talkie that each teacher keeps on his/her person). Upon notification, each teacher leads his/her class to

meet in the back field where attendance is taken. Administration remains in communication with all faculty for clearance to return into the building or to give further instruction. If there is an actual fire, the class teacher or administrator will communicate the event and plan for the remainder of the day to parents via text, email or phone call.

c. Severe Weather Drills

Great Oak School conducts quarterly severe weather drills during the school day. In the event of a drill or severe weather event that necessitates taking cover, the Administrator makes a school wide announcement via walkie talkie (that each teacher keeps on his/her person). Upon notification, each teacher leads his/her class to the safe place assigned to each class. The class teacher then takes attendance. Administration remains in communication with all faculty for clearance to return to class or to give further instruction. Continuing, if there is severe weather, the Class Teacher or Administrator will communicate, when he or she can do so safely, the circumstances and plan for the remainder of the day to parents via text, email or phone call.

d. Intruder Drills

Great Oak School conducts quarterly intruder drills during the school day. In the event of a drill or intruder that necessitates lockdown, the Administrator makes a school wide announcement via walkie talkie (that each teacher keeps on his/her person). Upon notification, each teacher leads his/her class to the safe place assigned to each class and locks the space from outside access. The class teacher then takes attendance. Administration remains in communication with all faculty for clearance to resume class or to give further instruction. Continuing, if there is an intruder, the class teacher or administrator will communicate, when he or she can do so safely, the circumstances and plan for the remainder of the day to parents via text, email or phone call.

e. Sexual Harassment

Inappropriate sexual conduct will not be tolerated and may constitute sexual harassment. Great Oak School does not condone or tolerate any form of sexual harassment involving employees or students. The school is committed to the creation and maintenance of a learning and work environment in which all persons who participate in school programs and activities can do so in an atmosphere free from all forms of sexual harassment.

f. Child Abuse Reporting

In Texas, anyone who suspects that a child is being abused or neglected has a legal obligation to report it. Professional reporters are required to report suspicion of abuse or neglect within 48 hours.

A Professional Reporter is anyone licensed or certified by the state or works for an agency or facility licensed or certified by the state and has contact with children as a result of their normal duties. By law, professionals may not delegate their duty to report to another person such as a co-worker or family member. Therefore, employees of Great Oak School that suspect child abuse or neglect will report as required to by state law.

g. Gun and Gang Free Zone

Great Oak School is a gun free zone. It is a federal crime for a person to possess a firearm on the grounds of or within 1000 feet of a public, parochial, or private school. Licensed law enforcement are exempt from this regulation.

Great Oak School is a gang free zone. Any gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of Great Oak School is a violation of the law and is therefore subject to penalty under state law.

4. COMMUNICATION

a. Class Meetings

Class meetings or parent conversations are scheduled at intervals throughout the academic year. The parent's primary connection to the school is through the child's teacher. It is expected that at least one member of the child's family attend these meetings. These meetings enable parents and teachers to discuss the class as a whole. The teachers speak about the work being done with the children and describe the year's rhythm. Parents' insights and questions about their children's experiences are welcome. These meetings are important. To miss them is to miss a significant link in understanding your children's education and a chance to work with the other parents in the class.

b. Town Hall Meetings

Great Oak School aims to hold an evening Town Hall meeting at least one time a year. These meetings are intended to bring the community together for collective communication. This is also an opportunity for faculty and staff to update the wider Great Oak community on the health and status of the school. All families are encouraged to attend these Town Hall meetings. Representatives of faculty, staff and Board of Directors will be present.

c. Communication with School

Great Oak School occasionally communicates on a school wide level via email. These emails serve as general announcements or reminders. In cases of emergencies, inclement weather or last minute notices, the school uses a text service, *Remind*. Upon enrollment, any family that provides a cell phone number will be added to this text list. If you want any additional person added to the text reminders you may inform the office. Lastly, if you do not wish to receive the texts, you can simply remove yourself from the service. Great Oak School also has a Great Oak School Families Facebook page. This is a closed group where families can post questions and also receive reminders about Great Oak School. To join this group, enrollment of a family member is required. Then the guardian may request to join the group.

During the school day, if you need to get a message to your child please call the school office at 281-516-7296 or email at info@greatoakschool.org.

It is our hope and expectation that you will participate in the life of the school in as many ways as you can. You will receive various kinds of communications throughout the school year about events and activities for the whole school community and about meetings and activities that are specifically for your child's class. When your child's teacher sends a letter or an article home, please take the time to read it carefully. There is an active group of parents in our school, which supports many of the

activities that take place for the school community. Get to know your fellow parents and become part of our school fabric.

If you (or a GOS parent or student) have sought a Stay-Away order against a perpetrator or are protected by an existing stay away order, notify an Administrative Director immediately so

that appropriate precautions can be taken.

d. Parent/Teacher Communication

Communication between home and school is an essential ingredient in the success of your child's experience at school. In addition to class meetings, your child's teacher will keep you informed about your child's progress. Two parent-teacher conference days, one in the fall, and one in the spring, are built into the annual school calendar specifically for this purpose. In addition, a parent may request a conference at any time for special concerns.

We ask that the teacher's morning preparation time be honored by scheduling private conversations at other times.

If you have brought a specific issue, concern or problem to your child's teacher and you feel the issue has not improved, changed, or has not adequately resolved despite having given some time and communication attempts, parents may contact the Listening Council.

e. End of the Year Student Reports

The End of the Year Report is a common feature in Waldorf Schools for Grade students. Grades on a report card do not give as full a picture of the child as we wish to share with the parents. A narrative report gives the teacher this added opportunity. In some ways, it is a continuation of the conversations you may have had with your teacher over the course of the year through phone calls, scheduled meetings, and parent-teacher conferences. It is the intention of the teachers that what you read will already be familiar information to you. It is intended to document areas where your child both struggles and excels. The End of Year Report begins with general observations, then moves on to address the academic areas of language arts and math, touches upon your child's artistic development, and includes the usually overlooked topic of your child's social interactions. These reports are intended to be a part of the ongoing dialogue between teacher and parent. They do not constitute a formal evaluation.

f. Student Records

Parents may have access to his or her child's files upon written request. Files will be prepared within 5 business days. These may include:

- Enrollment information
- Attendance records
- Incident reports
- End of the year student reports

g. Healthy Communication

The following policy arises out of the expectation that everyone will practice compassion, communicate directly and clearly, and expect the best from one another. We at all times encourage you to speak directly to the person with whom you have an issue, concern, question, or pressing matter, whenever possible.

i. Community-Wide Communications Policy

- Expect the best.
- Practice respectful communication at all times.
- Engage in direct speech, which includes:
 - Speaking directly to the teacher, parent, employee, or colleague with whom you have an issue, concern, question, or pressing matter.
 - Avoiding third-party conversations.

- Avoiding gossip, "parking lot conversations," and hurtful or critical speech when speaking about others.
- Avoiding the use of electronics to discuss important matters.

Communication Expectations

Great Oak School strives to create a positive social environment where every student has the opportunity to feel safe, welcomed, and celebrated for their innate spirit, individuality, unique abilities, interests and talents. It is our goal to foster a climate conducive to learning, exploration, expression, harmony, and beauty.

While it is the collective responsibility of all members of our community to foster this positive social climate, it is our singular and official responsibility as a school to establish behavioral expectations and restorative responses.

We recognize that in social communities, there will be moments of challenge. We see these moments as opportunities to model care and healthy tools of resolution for our students and one another. Great Oak School is both a school and a close-knit community. As a community, we all bear responsibility for treating each other with civility, respect and consideration, even when (maybe especially when) views, opinions and experiences are divergent. We recognize the socially trying times that we are currently in and wish to meet this challenge with clarity so that our school is socially harmonious and healthy. To support this intention we ask that all our community members abide by the following:

- We expect students and adults to be respectful and considerate of all members of the school community, visitors, and the general public.
- We expect students and adults to respect the differences and rights of others which include feelings, perspectives, ideas, experiences and opinions. When there is significant difference in this realm, we expect that all involved are willing to participate in finding a compromise.
- We expect students and adults to not endanger or harm others.
- We expect students and adults to respect other people's belongings, the school property and our neighboring areas.
- If you feel tension with another person, we suggest coming to a conversation with a question before making a statement.
- We ask everyone to operate on the premise that there is no 'bad' child or parent. Everyone is a striving, developing human being.
- We ask all community members to see everyday as a new day for everyone.
- We want this to be a place where mistakes may be restored.
- We ask parents and students to give one another the benefit of the doubt and we expect that parents will not speak ill of other students, parents or teachers.
- We expect that there will be no prejudicial or fanatical behavior.
- We expect students and adults to respect and contribute to the learning environment of our school, and to bring any issues forward which obstruct the learning environment in an appropriate and expeditious manner.

When a student or adult falls short of the above behavioral expectations, we embrace a restorative approach to communication and discipline. Details on our discipline processes are detailed in our family handbook, but for a quick reference, please note that we follow these steps:

1. Students involved in a simple misunderstanding may be asked to have a restorative conversation.
2. If a student physically and/or emotionally causes harm to another student, an incident report is completed and communicated to the administration and to parents. Appropriate consequences and restorative actions are determined and implemented.

- After several incident reports, a plan is created between the school and parent(s) (students are typically directly involved with this in grades two and above).
3. Should misconduct or behavior be or become too damaging, disruptive and/or unmanageable, a student and/or family may be asked to leave.

Restorative Communication Protocols:

Our communication protocols and expectations are detailed in our family handbook, but for quick reference, please follow these steps:

1. Pursue direct communication with the person with whom you have a wonder or difference (keeping in mind the above expectations of the expectation of an open minded and open hearted approach). Share your needs, communicate those kindly and listen to the needs/perspective of the other.
2. Make agreements that address your needs and the needs of the other.
3. Once you have practiced any new agreements for a reasonable time, check in with yourself and the other to see if the agreements help the friction you may be feeling/have felt.
4. If you do not feel that you can resolve your situation with direct communication OR direct communication does not get you to a satisfactory result, you may reach out to a Listening Council member (didianne@greatoakschool.org, beth@greatoakschool.org, lindsey@greatoakschool.org, mrs.harris@greatoakschool.org, mrs.hernandez@greatoakschool.org).
5. If you do not feel that your situation is resolved AFTER having done the above steps, you may reach out to a board member.

Restorative Conversations

(Please note that this tool is typically used as developmentally appropriate in grades 3 and up - we may use a version of this in an age appropriate way with grades 1 and 2 but would not be used in Early Childhood):

Restorative conversations are held in situations where there are differing experiences or opinions that create disagreement between two or more community members that would benefit from open communication. The intention of the conversation is to give a safe space where each person involved may share their experience, the associated feelings and the needs that arose from their experience. There will typically be a facilitator and a note-taker present in addition to the conversation participants. Parents of participating students may also be included if needed and agreed upon. The conversation would have four stages:

1. All parties share their objective experience of the situation being discussed.
2. All parties then share how the experience made them feel.
3. All parties are asked what was needed in the situation (the facilitator may help identify this for the children if they are unable to do so).
4. Once all experiences, feelings and needs have been shared, the facilitator will help guide the involved parties to consider future agreements. Depending on the seriousness, these agreements may be written down or just verbally agreed upon.

A restorative conversation may take as little as a few minutes and up to several hours, depending on the nature and complexity of the situation and the age of the participants. Soon after the conversation, it is strongly recommended that all involved in the conversation have a check-in, either with one of the facilitators or another involved party, to see how they reflect on the conversation and if the agreements are working.

Conversation etiquette:

- Respectful, kind speech and open minds are expected.

- There is only one speaker at a time and the facilitator manages the time and space so that there is equitable time (as much as possible) for all involved.
- The conversation is confidential except to parents and/or other agreed upon individuals (spouses, etc.)
- The participants are asked to be active, engaged listeners.
- The participants are asked to not eat, fidget, make noises, etc. or otherwise disrupt the flow of conversation.

If you need further information about any aspect of our behavior, communication and/or restorative practices and expectations, please contact administration at info@greatoakschool.org.

Great Oak School prefers in-person communications. This means that all important matters should be discussed in person or over the phone when practicable, never via email or text. Email/text should be used for planning and requesting meetings and phone conversations. This applies to bringing concerns to faculty and board members. Please address issues in a timely manner and be proactive and forthright. Refrain from emotionally laden content within earshot of children and/or other adults. Sensitive conversations should be held privately.

If you have any concerns or questions of any kind, or if anything changes in your home life or routine, please share this with your child's teacher. We ask that morning time before class be viewed as sacred, as mentioned in paragraph d.) above. If you need to address an issue with your child's teacher, please schedule a time to meet with them without children and refrain from bringing sensitive topics during morning preparations for the day. We also ask that all conversations concerning a child or children take place outside of their presence to protect their own self-awareness and confidence. If meetings with the teacher occur during regular aftercare hours, then childcare for the duration of the meeting is available for the student and enrolled siblings free of charge. To avoid a charge, parents should note this on the aftercare sign in sheet.

ii. Concerns Procedure

We suggest the following process for anyone who needs to discuss a conflict or concern with a member of our community.

- Speak directly to the person with whom you have a concern or question.
- The person will summarize back to you what they hear, and provide you with a plan for a resolution and timeline, if necessary. If more consultation is needed with colleagues, they will schedule a second meeting with you to discuss the timeline/plan.
- Allow the person of concern sufficient time to respond appropriately, avoiding "checking in" before the proposed follow-up meeting.
- Attend a follow-up conversation regarding the issue. This provides an opportunity for both parties to update, clarify, and respond. It keeps the concerned party involved and in direct dialogue about the issue.
- If things remain unresolved after the first 4 steps, please take your concerns to any member of the Listening Council.

Listening Council

Please inquire at the front office for a current list of Listening Council members.

Purpose:

The Listening Council will serve an ombudsman function, handling topics of concern brought by any party in the school for consideration, providing unified and timely responses to inquiries that involve joint faculty-administrative collaboration, action plans, oversight, and/or follow up.

Membership of Council:

The Listening Council consists of 1 or more representatives from Administration, 1 representative from Early Childhood faculty, and 2 representatives from the Grades faculty. Its members are nominated by a faculty group consisting of both administrative and faculty staff persons.

The Listening Council will conduct a review. The concerned party will receive a verbal and written response that will include conclusions reached through the review process and what action will be taken to address the matter.

If the report and recommendations are unsatisfactory, the parent may reply with a written appeal to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees will accommodate an additional review of all written documents and meetings and will issue a final determination within 4 weeks.

5. ORGANIZATION OF THE SCHOOL

Great Oak School strives to balance the academic, artistic and practical realms of education while cultivating a lifelong love of learning and enthusiasm. Great Oak School has four groups that carry out all the diverse functions of its life and activity. Each group works together to support the education of our children.

a. Faculty

The Faculty is responsible for carrying and implementing the pedagogical aspect of Great Oak School, as well as nurturing its spiritual life through study, movement, artistic exercise, and festivals. The Faculty works together to implement the school's educational vision.

b. Administration

The Administration ensures that the school runs smoothly by: supporting the faculty and families, implementing policies and procedures, overseeing daily operations and enrollment, providing guidance on program and pedagogy, facilitating personnel needs, conducting outreach and maintaining state and local licensing as well as status with AWSNA (the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America).

c. Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees keeps the mission of the school in focus. The Board works with the Administration to accomplish the mission. The Board is responsible for the legal, strategic planning, budget approval, fundraising leadership and risk management oversight of the school. With advance notification and planning with the administration or a board member, board meetings (unless specific, confidential information is being discussed) are open to all adult members of the school community on a visitation basis. Every Board meeting is recorded by the secretary and stored digitally.

d. Parent Body

The Parent Body, through the Parent Circle and as individuals, is the foundation. The Parent Body supports Great Oak School in many ways, including fundraising, supporting festivals, nurturing and supporting new school families, and fostering volunteer efforts.

Parents and teachers work in partnership to ensure each child's healthy development through the years.

Great Oak School Governance 2023/2024

The purpose of the governance structure at Great Oak School is to create effective methods of operation in order to provide an environment that will support the healthy education of the students whom we serve and a healthy environment for our full community. According to Waldorf best practices, the governance is structured to allow the faculty to collaborate with administration and the board on decision-making. We do this while honoring the community's wisdom and the spiritual wellspring that gives life to Waldorf Education.

Like most private schools in our phase of growth, the Governance structure at Great Oak School is in development. We expect that the next few years will continue to bring additional structure to the roles and responsibilities within the school's operations.

While most western organizations operate in a tiered hierarchical structure, Waldorf schools work in consensus and collaboration. While the faculty are the heart of most all decision making processes at Great Oak School, the faculty is served by administration to facilitate decisions and to guide various areas of growth. Our current administration consists of:

Finance Director - Zuzana Leckova (zuzana@greatoakschool.org)

- TADS billing
- Tuition Assistance
- Payroll
- Bookkeeping
- Budget oversight
- Audit oversight

Outreach Director - Beth Holden (beth@greatoakschool.org)

- Outreach and Fundraising
- Advertising and social media presence
- Parent Circle
- Enrollment
- Early Childhood Support
- Community Engagement
- Student, parent and teacher support
- Day-to-day Operations

Pedagogical Director - Didianne Gilman (didianne@greatoakschool.org)

- Curriculum and programming
- Enrollment
- School growth and maturation
- Human Resources
- Budget planning
- Special projects (strategic plan, AWSNA liaison, etc.)
- Teacher support
- Student and parent support
- Day-to-day operations

6. SCHOOL YEAR

a. Calendar

The Great Oak School calendar can be accessed at any time on the Great Oak website. Check it frequently as it reflects any changes that occur throughout the school year.

b. Annual Celebrations and Performances

Celebrations and festivals are an important aspect of the young child's life. Celebrations add meaning and a sense of change and becoming. Throughout history, in all civilizations, there are celebrations reflecting nature's rhythms. We celebrate these to sustain and renew ourselves. To the young child, each day has something of a festival quality. For the children, the elements of a festival - light, food, song and story - permeate the weekly school and home rhythms; but the cadence of the year receives its form through festivals. Annual, seasonal festivals of nature and humanity are celebrated in ways that foster wonder, reverence, involvement, and gratitude. Teachers, parents and children work together in anticipation and celebration to express the unique character and variety of major and minor festivals appropriate to the child's age.

In order to be sensitive to the wide variety of cultures and beliefs represented in our population, we like to focus on the common aspects among festivals such as community, love, light, family, food, gratitude and simplicity. By looking at the underlying reason behind a particular festival we can then translate the celebration into activities that are meaningful and age-appropriate for young children. Typically these include stories, food, games, songs, and simple crafts. We ardently strive to avoid the commercial aspects of holidays in the classroom. Throughout the school year there are a variety of special festivals that mark the seasons in which families may be invited to participate.

i. School Blessing

The School Blessing is led by a Native American community member of Great Oak, the teachers smudge classrooms for the coming year to protect the school and honor the heritage of the land we inhabit.

ii. Michaelmas

Michaelmas is an equinox festival named after the Archangel Michael, a cultural reference to courage and transformation. It is at this time that the image of Michael with the dragon appears before us as a mighty imagination, challenging us to develop strong, brave, and free wills to overcome anxiety and fear. This demands inner activity and a renewal of the soul, which is brought to consciousness in the Michaelmas festival, the festival of the will. The challenges of the autumn season are presented dramatically for the children in the stories and images of the Michael stories and verses. This is the first of the "light through darkness" festivals, which come to us from Northern cultures with long and dark winters.

iii.Enchanted Forest

The Enchanted Forest is presented by the grades children for the Early Childhood students and younger siblings. On or around Halloween, the forest on our property is festively decorated for modified trick-or-treating with lots of homemade goodies.

iv.Día de los Muertos

The Mexican festival of the Day of the Dead is celebrated through our Spanish program with a brief school-wide assembly to remember our relatives, friends and beloved pets.

v.Martinmas (Lantern Walk)

Each child makes her/his own lantern in class one or two weeks before this festival. The families gather on a November evening to walk together as a community. We sing with glimmering lanterns held high to carry light into the approaching darkness of winter.

vi.Advent Assemblies

On Monday mornings between Thanksgiving and Christmas the school assembles to recognize and honor the kingdoms of nature during Advent and share presentations by the world language and strings classes.

vii.Advent Spiral

With quiet anticipation we approach the Winter solstice and Christmas season with a candlelit journey inward at the Advent Spiral. During school hours each class visits a spiral labyrinth of greenery built by our school community. Then one at a time, each child walks through the spiral of evergreens to the center and lights their candle, then places it along the spiral and walks back out of the spiral. An opportunity for families and members of our wider community to participate is offered after school hours. The elements of this festival speak to the human being on many different levels. One of these is the climax of darkness outside, the meeting of the light within, and the anticipation of the light returning to the outside world in spring.

viii.St. Nicholas

Students polish a rain boot before setting it out at night for St. Nicholas to fill with a small treat.

ix.Santa Lucia

Second grade sings and serves sweet rolls to all classes in traditional Santa Lucia dress during school hours. This festival, like Martinmas and the Advent Spiral, celebrates the preservation of light in the midst of darkness.

x.Caroling Around the Tree

On the last day before winter break, the school gathers in an assembly to sing Christmas carols that each class has chosen.

xi. 100 Day Party

On the one hundredth day of school the third grade students prepare a special pathway of one hundred steps for the second and first grade students to walk. Other special activities involving the number one hundred may also be included in this school tradition.

xii.Valentine's Day

Each class celebrates in a unique manner. More information will come from the class teacher.

xiii. Spring Festival and Friends and Family Day

Our festival brings the school community of families together to celebrate the beginning of spring. We invite extended family and friends to join us for this special visitation and celebration day to welcome this season of renewal.

xiv. Field Day

Students move through stations of fun and entertaining activities to celebrate the last day of school.

xv. Fly Away Ceremony

We enjoy celebrating our early childhood children and families during this sweet ceremony that denotes a change of class as a child grows and matures.

xvi. Reverse Rose Ceremony

This ceremony is to honor our graduating 8th grade students. Each class will offer a prepared presentation after which, our first graders will present a rose to their 8th grade friends.

xvii. Grand Handshake

To say a formal goodbye for the summer, this is an opportunity for each grade student to shake the hands of all teachers and administrators as we wish one another well until school begins again in the fall.

xviii. Eighth Grade Graduation

To formally recognize the accomplishments of our 8th grade graduates, we enjoy a community graduation gathering.

xix. Birthdays

Each child's own birthday is a festival to be celebrated. When your child has a birthday, there will be a special celebration at school. Each class has its own birthday traditions, which are usually held close to the actual date of birth, or near the half-birthday for summer children. On the day of the celebration, the special child is honored at a circle or story, depending on the class. Be in touch with your teacher in regard to the way birthdays will be celebrated in your child's class. If food is part of the celebration, strict attention to classroom allergies is required. We encourage families to include the child's entire class in birthday parties whenever possible. Please refrain from discussing birthday parties and playdates at school to avoid hurt feelings by the children not included. Help your child to do likewise.

xx. Class Plays

At the discretion of the class teacher, Grades classes prepare and perform plays for the school community based on curriculum subject matter for that grade. (First Grade retains the option of performing by invitation only for a very small audience.)

xxi. Orchestra and Strings Performances

Our strings and orchestra teachers coordinate each year to provide the community with two music performances each year.

7. SCHOOL FINANCE

a. Fundraising

In order to keep tuition costs low, Great Oak School actively fundraises throughout the year. If

your company matches volunteer hours and/or will contribute to a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, please talk with the Finance Director. In addition, if you have a connection to someone at a foundation and would like to have Great Oak School submit a proposal, please let a Board member know. Families are also asked to volunteer at special events. If you have any ideas about raising money for our school, please bring this to the Board. If fundraising is an area that interests you, please sign up to be on our Fundraising Committee.

Major fundraising events include Annual Ask giving campaign (once each year, usually in October), Gala (annual evening event of dinner and live and silent auction) and The Pop-Up Shop.

b. Tuition and Fees

New Student Application Fee:

\$100 due upon submission of application. This fee is *non-refundable*.

Enrollment Deposit:

\$500 due upon approval of application. This fee is *non-refundable* and *non-transferable* and will be applied towards tuition.

Festival and Facility Fee:

\$350 due with the first month's tuition. This fee is *non-refundable*.

Supply Fee:

Half due by August 1st and half due by December 1st. This fee is *non-refundable*.

Tuition Payments:

Great Oak School offers a monthly, semi-annual and annual payment schedule.

Preschool:

Tuition:

3 Full Days \$8,700; 3 Half Days \$8,100; Supply Fee: \$375
4 Full Days \$11,600; 4 Half Days \$10,700; Supply Fee: \$450
5 Full Days \$14,500; 5 Half Days \$13,500; Supply Fee: \$500

Kindergarten:

Tuition: 5 Full Days \$12,700; 5 Half Days \$11,700
Supply Fee: \$500

Grades:

Tuition: Grades 1 - 5 \$13,100; Grades 6 - 8 \$14,200
Supply Fee: \$700

Extended Hours:

The prepaid monthly Aftercare rate is \$75 for one day a week.

Sibling Discount:

Great Oak School offers a 10% sibling discount for a second child enrolled in the school, 20% sibling discount for a third child enrolled and a 30% sibling discount for the fourth child enrolled. The sibling discount is available at 5% for 5 full day students in preschool.

c. Tuition Assistance

The purpose of the tuition assistance program is to enable qualified students to attend Great Oak School who might not otherwise be able to attend for financial reasons. The Board of Trustees and members of the Tuition Assistance Committee determine the tuition assistance budget for each academic year. The Tuition Assistance Committee sets the application deadline for each year and determines awards. Tuition assistance awards are based on factors such as each applicant's financial need as demonstrated in the application and supporting documents; availability of funds within the school's annual tuition assistance budget; and need within specific classes. Please note that admission decisions are made separately from tuition assistance decisions.

Tuition assistance is not available for preschool students. Also, tuition assistance is not available for the Supply Fee, Festival & Facility Fee, and Enrollment Deposit.

Tuition assistance awards are made only after your child has been accepted to the school.

The maximum tuition assistance for kindergarten and grades students is 50%. Because of the 50% limit, it is very important that our families are able to demonstrate that they can sustain enrollment year to year within the parameters of our tuition assistance program. Therefore, we must consider whether a family qualifies to pay 50% of the annual tuition and fees when reviewing a student's application.

Each family must apply for tuition assistance annually. Great Oak School does not guarantee the same level of financial support from year to year. In order to receive tuition assistance, it is important that you follow the instructions and submit your application along with all required documentation by the application deadline.

Eligibility for assistance is based on financial need documented through TADS. All parents and step-parents, as well as all adults living in the child's household, are expected to complete the application and submit financial documents to TADS. If extenuating circumstances exist, a letter may be submitted through TADS explaining the omission of a parent's or other adult's financial information. Applications and all supporting documents submitted by the deadline set each year are given priority. Late, incomplete, and mid-year applications will be considered if funds remain.

Tuition assistance recipients must notify the Committee of a 10% or more increase in annualized income or/and increase in assets of more than \$10,000. Failure to report these changes may jeopardize the award and future awards. Tuition assistance recipients must maintain current accounts with the School. An account more than 30 days overdue may jeopardize the award and future awards.

Once the tuition assistance budget is reached for the academic year, the awards will be reduced as following: no tuition assistance when a class is almost full (one open spot), 10% maximum tuition assistance when a class is close to full (two open spots) and 25% maximum tuition assistance when a class is not full.

Families receiving tuition assistance are expected to volunteer for the School at least 20 hours per academic year (prorated for mid-year applicants). Volunteer assistance includes but is not limited to assisting teachers, supporting parent council committees, and providing facilities

maintenance. Information related to tuition assistance is kept in strict confidence. A waiver to any of the above requirements may be granted by either the Tuition Assistance Committee or the Board of Trustees.

Application Procedure:

- Enroll in the School using the TADS system. An extension of time for payment of the enrollment deposit may be obtained from the Finance Director.
- Complete the TADS tuition assistance application online. Submit all supporting documents, including tax return(s) for the most recent calendar year (for 2021-2022 school year, 2020 tax return must be submitted), through the TADS system.
- Make sure you are current on your account with the School. An application cannot be considered until you have paid all amounts due to the School.
- After your application is complete, the Committee will issue a letter to the applicant and Finance Director stating the tuition assistance award.
- Pay the enrollment deposit to finalize enrollment in the School.
- Volunteer at least 20 hours (prorated for mid-year applicants) during the academic year and keep your School accounts current.

8. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

a. Creating a Supportive Home Environment

When a child begins at Great Oak School, he/she and his/her family become a part of a community. The teachers and parents enter a partnership. Simple, predictable routines work best for children. We encourage parents to slow down the pace. Choose simplicity; after school lessons and early sport activities can wait a few years. Creating healthy rhythms in your home is a gift to the security and healthy development of your child. Predictable bedtimes, mealtimes, and daily schedules are difficult to achieve in this very fast-paced world. However, they are essential for a child's growth and development. A child is very active, moving and doing as their body is physically growing. An early dinner, quiet evening activities, and an early bedtime enable a child to be up and ready for school the next day. When a child lives with consistent and clear routines, a child feels secure in knowing what to expect next. When this occurs, transitions to meals, to sleep, or to other activities become easier and conflict is lessened. We know that creating a healthy family life can be difficult in our complicated world. We are always happy to meet with parents to find ways to help each individual family work out these issues.

At home, parents can help the child by setting clear limits and expectations. We encourage protecting children from electronic media in all forms except staying in contact with distant relatives. Children love to be involved with real activities. Helping to prepare meals and to clean up, caring for plants and animals, being out in nature, and lots of imaginative play both indoors and out are the essential elements of a child's day. Even a three or four year old child can have a chore that they can do every day at the same time. Setting the napkins at dinner, giving the dog water every morning, or placing the toy trucks into the garage every evening are just a few suggestions that can help develop healthy habits and a strong will. Children look to their parents as models for their own development. When children are given too many choices they can become uncertain and nervous. Children need loving, consistent adults as models, so that one day they can become that model.

Bedtime routines can provide a wonderful opportunity to slow down the pace of the day and be together with your child in a quiet, warm setting. Children have varying needs for sleep:

- Toddlers (1-3 years) 12-14 hours
 - Preschoolers (3-5 years) 11-13 hours
 - School age (5-10 years) 10-11 hours
 - Teens (10-17 years) 8.5-9.25 hours
- (Source: National Sleep Foundation)

An early bedtime enables the child to get a good rest and gives parents time for themselves as well. When a routine is established every day at the same time, the child becomes accustomed to the rhythm, feels secure, and looks forward to this special time each day. Teachers will be happy to work with families to give further suggestions.

b. Playdates

Friendships are encouraged between all students, and playdates support that. In particular, one-on-one play dates are encouraged for students who are experiencing social difficulties with one another during the school day. The opportunity to make a personal connection outside of the larger group can be transformative for both the students' dynamic with one another and for the parents' concerns.

c. Recommended Reading

Family Life:

Simplicity Parenting by Kim John Payne and Lisa Ross
 Beyond The Rainbow Bridge: Nurturing our Children from Birth to Seven by Barbara I. Patterson, Pamela Bradley, & Jean Riordan
 You Are Your Child's First Teacher by Rahima Baldwin
 Lifeways Working with Family Questions by Gundrun Davy & Bons Voors
 Between Form & Freedom - A Practical Guide to the Teenage Years by Betty Staley
 Seven Times the Sun - Guiding Children Through Rhythms of The Day by Shea Darian
 Who's Bringing Them Up? Television and Child Development by Martin Large
 Parenting, A Path through Childhood by Dotty Turner Coplen
 Raising a Daughter, Raising a Son by Jeanne & Don Elium

Family Activities:

The Children's Year by Cooper, Fynes-Clinton & Rowling
 Festivals, Family & Food by Diana Carey & Judy Large
 Toymaking with Children by Freya Jaffke
 Painting with Children by Brunhild Miller
 Simple Environmental Activities for Young Children by Carol Petrash
 Festivals Together - A Guide to Multi-Cultural Celebration by S. Fitzjohn, M. Weston & J. Large

Education and Childhood Development:

Understanding Waldorf Education by Jack Petrash
 Children at Play by Heidi Britz-Crecelius
 The Way of the Child by A.C. Harwood
 Phases of Childhood by B. C. J. Lievegoed
 Teaching as a Lively Art by Marjorie Spock
 Dumbing us Down by John Taylor Gatto
 Towards Wholeness by M.C. Richards
 Childhood by Caroline von Heydebrand
 Waldorf Education-A Family Guide by Fenner, Pamela Johnson and Karen L. Rivers
 Waldorf Schools, Volumes I & II by Ruth Pusch

Education in Search of the Spirit by John Fentress Gardner
Encountering the Self by Herman Koepke
Waldorf Education: Schools for the 21st Century by Eugene Schwartz
Millennial Child by Eugene Schwartz
Endangered Minds by Jane Healey
The Lively Art of Education by Marjory Spock
School as a Journey: The Eight-Year Odyssey of a Waldorf Teacher and His Class by Torin Finser

Links:

<http://www.youandyourchildshealth.org/>

<http://www.waldorfearlychildhood.org/>

<https://waldorfeducation.org/>

<http://millennialchild.com/>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We hope that our Family Handbook will serve as a bridge between teachers and parents, between ideals and actualities, between the world of school and the world of home. One of the foundations of this form of education is an abiding respect for the true nature of the child, and, by extension, respect for all people. Because of this mutual respect, parents and teachers in our school work closely together in guiding the children. Conversations and dialogue are essential. It is not the easiest path to accept responsibility for all these relationships, but it is surely the most rewarding. We hope this Handbook will help you, inspire you, and reaffirm your enthusiasm for Waldorf education.