

# Early Childhood Policy Handbook



*“Receive the child in reverence. Educate them in love.  
Let them go forth in freedom.”*

*– Rudolf Steiner*

## Table of Contents

Early Childhood Mission Statement	4
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Statement	4
Prairie Hill Waldorf School Early Childhood Tenets	5
Classroom Placement Policy	6
Home Visits*	7
Transitioning from Home to School	8
Arrival and Dismissal	9
Absences	10
Illnesses	10
Clothing	11
Items To Keep at Home	13
Media Policy	13
Discipline	14
Communications	15
Rest and Sleep	17
Potty Training	17
Nourishment	18
Visiting the Early Childhood Classrooms	18
After School Care Program	18
Festival Life	19
First Grade Readiness	20
First Grade Readiness Assessments	20
Parent/Guardian Opportunities	21
Social Inclusion	22

*“The best preparation for being a happy and useful adult is to live fully as a child.”*

*– Plowden Report*

Dear Early Childhood Families,

Thank you for partnering with **Prairie Hill Waldorf School** in gifting your children their childhood. Our children’s early years offer us a unique opportunity to create meaningful memories, form lasting habits, and enrich their futures.

This handbook will serve as an introduction to our Early Childhood Programs and acquaint you with information and ideas that we feel are important for the wellbeing of our young children.

We encourage you to reference the [\*Prairie Hill Waldorf School Parent Handbook\*](#) for further information on school policies throughout the year. Please ask your child’s teacher any questions as they arise. To quote Joan Almon, founder of the Alliance for Childhood and longtime Waldorf kindergarten teacher: “The best protection for Waldorf education is the ever-deepening commitment and on-going learning of teachers and parents.” We hope this *Early Childhood Family Handbook* will provide such support.

Thank you,

*The Early Childhood Teachers*

## **Prairie Hill Waldorf School**

### **Early Childhood Mission Statement**

We believe that early childhood, birth to age seven, is a unique period of life that deserves respect, guidance, nurture, and time.

We work out of Rudolf Steiner's pedagogy, believing that children have not only a physical nature, but a soul and spiritual one as well.

Meaningful work and creative play in a structured environment are the pillars upon which a healthy life can be built.

Of utmost importance is the development of social-emotional skills that serve the children in one day realizing their potential in relation to others and themselves.

## **Prairie Hill Waldorf School**

### **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Statement**

Prairie Hill Waldorf School exists within the larger community of Waldorf schools with a long-standing commitment to social renewal. We strive to create a conscious, and collaborative learning community that provides our students with the necessary foundation for adapting to our ever-changing world. In accordance with these values, we are committed to supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion as a pathway to social justice and to rectify the explicit and implicit biases that undermine the efforts of building a healthy social life. We are dedicated to the self-reflection needed to strengthen this mission. We are committed to awakening to the needs of all and ensuring that our school addresses diversity, equity, and inclusion in ways that are meaningful and impactful.

## Prairie Hill Waldorf School Early Childhood Tenets

### Young Children Have the Right To:

- 1. Master the Physical World:** Young children are gradually “moving into” their physical bodies, and so need plenty of opportunities and space to move, work, and play. They are also building up their physical bodies in the early years, requiring warmth and movement. Their education takes place primarily through an active participation in the life around them.
- 2. Be supported by a daily, weekly, and yearly rhythm:** Consistency and predictability are foundational to children’s health, development, sense of self, confidence, and future learning. A breathing, unhurried unfolding of the day, the week, and the year benefits both children and the caregiver.
- 3. Develop in a mixed-age environment with a consistent caregiver:** Ongoing, nurturing relationships are essential to a child’s sense of security and emotional well-being. A setting that includes diverse ages allows younger children to aspire to their future and the older ones to serve, lead and nurture the little ones.
- 4. Develop social-emotional skills:** In the early years, much of children’s work is about learning healthy social skills: meeting new friends, sharing, waiting, asking, thanking, helping those in need, etc.
- 5. Experience a sense of inclusion and diversity:** We strive to create an inclusive community that respects and affirms each of its members, honoring their diversity of culture, ethnicity, race, religion, family structure, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical abilities, and unique learning styles.
- 6. Have extensive time for creative, social play:** Imaginative, uninterrupted play with open-ended toys that can be continually transformed is the cornerstone of childhood and foundation of their social-emotional development.

7. **Experience meaningful, purposeful, practical life-skills:** Ideally, children have the opportunity to join in, as they are able, with the adults around them as they engage in the daily tasks of life: cooking, cleaning, gardening, washing, woodworking, etc.
8. **Have daily, extended contact with the natural world:** Indoors, the children's senses are deepened and developed when surrounded by playthings made of natural materials. Outdoors, the seasons, discoveries, and transformations in nature are a healing balm to the young child. Children are able to form bonds with the earth, which later transforms into stewardship.
9. **Experience the nurturing arts:** Children know they are loved when they are washed, sung to, given a rest, bandaged, have their hair brushed, feet massaged or back rubbed.
10. **Help prepare, serve and eat nutritious, mind and body-building food:** Knowing the source of their food and being a part of its preparation are skills that will serve them throughout their lives.
11. **Be exposed to and take part in artistic offerings:** Puppet shows, live music, song, verse, and storytelling, provide children with a language-rich environment that builds their imagination, gives them pictures to inform their moral intelligence, and provide soothing human connections. Drawing, watercolor painting, and simple handwork projects allow them to connect their inner and outer world while developing important fine-motor skills and neural pathways necessary for later learning.

*“From the very beginning of their education, children should experience the joy of discovery.”*

*–Alfred North Whitehead*

Discovering new friends is one of the first and deepest joys young children learn. In Waldorf schools, the teachers make a concerted effort to build up each class as a strong social body. Of utmost importance to Waldorf education is the emphasis its founder, Rudolf Steiner, placed on social renewal. His ideals were far-reaching and included the knowledge that the needs of the whole are to be considered alongside the needs of the individual. We can begin to work with the idea that it is not only our own child we have a responsibility towards, but also all of the children in our community.

The Early Childhood faculty is committed to creating a healthy physical, social, and pre-academic environment for all students enrolled. To this end, we collectively review applications and evaluate feedback about the children from the applications, and where applicable, from the previous teacher(s) or caregiver(s). It is our policy to assign children to a classroom based on age, gender, and temperament with the intention of creating a balanced social dynamic in all of our early childhood classrooms. Further, we look at assigning children to that kindergarten which their older sibling attended when applicable to build on the family and child’s familiarity with the teacher as well as the classroom. The parents/guardians and teachers are also able to deepen their work and relationships with already-established foundations. We recommend placing twin siblings in their own kindergarten classrooms to allow for independent growth until the first grade.

Much time and thought goes into the placing of children into the various classrooms. During the summer, the Early Childhood faculty along with the Admissions Coordinator and the Learning Support Coordinator finalizes the rosters for the Playgroup, Wonder Garden and Kindergarten classes. We thank you for respecting our process of creating a balanced group of children in each classroom. A letter from the teacher welcoming the child to the class will be sent by mid-August. Through trusting in the school’s process and the destiny of the children, a healthy class is formed and all of the children benefit.

## **Home Visits\***

*"No significant learning occurs without significant relationships."*

*- James Comer*

In order for the teacher to begin to form a connection to the children and create a broader picture of them, we offer home visits to new kindergarten students. These are regularly done in Waldorf schools, as it helps to create a feeling of security for the children when they experience the bridge between home and school. Each child will have the opportunity to host their lead kindergarten teacher at their home for a brief visit. The children can become familiar with the teacher on their own "turf," while the teacher can gain insights into the children's world after seeing their special hide-outs, favorite toys, or backyard.

\*Note that due to the pandemic, home visits have been suspended until further notice.

## **Transitioning from Home to School**

*"We shape our buildings, thereafter, they shape us."*

*- Winston Churchill*

Stepping over the threshold of the school community offers a unique opportunity to instill lifelong habits in children. In order to begin building a feeling that school is a special place with special rules, we ask that you help support our community as we work toward an environment that respects people as well as property. It is important that the adults uphold the following courtesies for our children until they are able to take them up on their own:

- Staying next to Mom, Dad, caregiver or the carpooling adult's side until delivered to the class teacher at arrival time, or to the car at dismissal, is of utmost importance.

- “Walking feet” (as opposed to running ones) are the preferred mode of transportation indoors.
- Stairway manners include holding on to railings as needed (as opposed to sliding down them a la Mary Poppins) and stepping down stairs (as opposed to leaping like Spiderman.)
- “Indoor voices” are requested unless the children are outside under the “Big Blue Sky” which can hold their “big” voices.
- Caring for our shared spaces (hallways, bathrooms, community center/ gym, and indoor and outdoor classrooms) promotes both outer and inner order. Please take special care of the children’s cubby and hallway area.

## **Arrival and Dismissal**

*“Our job as early childhood teachers, is to be with the children and create a space for them to feel exactly how they feel for as long as they need to feel it.”*

*~ Teacher Tom*

Beginnings are full of lasting implications, thus how we begin our day is important. Please make sure children have eaten a healthy breakfast before school (ideally this will include protein), are dressed for the elements, and arrive at school on time. It is difficult for young children to enter a space once the activity has already begun. If your commute is long, please make a stop at the bathroom before departing or upon arrival, and allow time for children to take an adult supervised walk or run outdoors before entering the classroom, if/when the class is beginning indoors. A quick drop-off eases transition worries and models to children our trust in their teachers.

The teacher will inform you where to drop off and pick up the children prior to the start of the school year. The official school day starts promptly at 8:00am sharp for the Kindergarten classes. During drop off the teachers’ attention is focused on the children and the work of the day, so please save any “adult talk” for non-class hours.

If something important needs to be communicated, passing a written note to the teacher is advised and/or contacting the school office at (262) 646-7497.

At dismissal, please make sure that the teacher knows when you are leaving with a child. If for some reason parents/guardians are unable to pick up a child within the 10 minutes after the end of the day (M/T/W/F by 3:25pm and Thursday by 2:55pm), we will escort your child to the front office to wait for your arrival in the front of the school. If you know in advance that you will be late, our After Care Program is available and can be scheduled by contacting the School Office. Note there is a charge for this service.

If children will be carpooling, provide the teacher with a written schedule of the carpool arrangements and inform the fellow drivers of our arrival and dismissal policies. If someone other than a parent/guardian or carpooling adult will be picking up, please inform the teacher and school office in advance.

## **Absences**

If children will be absent from class, we ask the parent/guardian to call the School Office and leave a message, including the reason for the absence as well as contacting your child's teacher directly, e.g. email or text message. This helps the teachers keep abreast of the child's condition and/or what may be happening in the child's life.

## **Illnesses**

*"We can begin to understand illness at a deeper level and see it as a challenge to the organism which, to be overcome, involves the child in a kind of bodily process of learning."*

*- Michaela Glockler, M.D.*

The children's health is important to us. Each morning at arrival time, we pay special attention to how the children are doing. We are not equipped to care for sick children at school, and if children develop symptoms of illness during the day, we'll contact you to take the child home. To return to class, parents/guardians will need to follow the new Covid policy for returning children to school after an illness.

Please keep children at home if they have:

- a fever (a child can not return to school until they are fever free for 24 hours straight and without the aid of fever-reducing medication.)
- heavy nasal discharge or yellowish-green nasal discharge
- a persistent cough or sneeze not related to a known allergy
- symptoms associated with a communicable disease: red eyes, sore throat, headache, abdominal pain, fever
- impetigo, pink eye, chicken pox, head lice, or pinworms

If a child develops a communicable disease, please notify the school at once. We will then send out a form to alert the other families in the class, while keeping the child's name confidential. If a child vomits at school, parents/guardians will be contacted and plans will be made based on the teacher's discretion.

We will also contact you if, in our opinion, a child is unable to participate fully in a normal day, whether due to illness, fatigue, or unusual distress. Young children can be especially overwhelmed by school activity if they are tired or not feeling well.

**Vomiting and/or Diarrhea:** If a child vomits or has diarrhea, they must remain at home until all symptoms are gone and no vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours. If the vomiting or diarrhea occurs at school, and is unrelated to illness (e.g., a response to food, caused by anxiety, etc), and the child has no other symptoms, the child may remain at school and you will be notified. Teachers will use common sense and evaluate this on a case by case basis. Keep in mind, when a child has been vomiting, they may be exhausted for at least a day with little energy. Please make sure that you have a back-up plan for picking up your child, if you are not available.

## Clothing

*“There is no such thing as bad weather,  
only poor clothing choices.”*

*- Ulrike Schmaar, Forest Kindergarten Teacher*

Mother Nature is said to be the archetypal teacher, and we encourage the children to explore her as fully as possible. The puddles, mud, and snow call out to be played in, and as we have so few years to fully immerse ourselves in them, we take full advantage of these opportunities. At Prairie Hill, we want the children to experience the joy of exploration, so it is important to dress them in sturdy clothes, appropriate for the weather conditions. Dressing in layers is usually the best way to ensure that they are ready for anything.

All growing things need warmth, so we ask that the children always have their back, stomach, legs, and feet covered. There may be a few warm days in the fall and spring when shorts are warranted. [The Prairie Hill Waldorf School Family Handbook](#) states that shorts can be worn when the temperature is above 65 degrees in the morning. An outdoor hat is important no matter what the season: a wide-brimmed hat and sunscreen for warm days, and a warm hat and scarf, or face mask (balaclava) for chilly weather.

Media-influenced clothing, such as clothes with TV or movie characters, is not appropriate for school. Sports teams, large product logos or brand names are also discouraged. This includes underwear and undershirts. These types of clothes tend to influence the child and the play in the classroom. Prairie Hill’s school spirit wear can be worn at school.

All clothing and gear need to be clearly labeled with the child’s name. You must provide the school with a labeled bag for their child’s change-of seasonally appropriate clothes. Each bag needs to include multiples of: pants, shirts, sweaters, underwear, and socks all labeled for those days when the elements get the best of us. Some parents/guardians have found it helpful to keep large

garbage bags in their cars for muddy outerwear at dismissal time.

[Here](#) is a link to an article about how to layer and recommendations on specific gear from a seasoned parent.

## Items To Keep at Home

*“If you want to see what children can do, stop giving them things.” -*

*Norman Douglas*

In order to encourage as much freedom of play as possible, we ask that you make sure that all personal belongings are left at home or in the car. This includes items such as toys, jewelry, candy, gum, money and umbrellas.

## Media Policy

*“At the empathetic stage, 0-7 years, the child is intensely sensitive, even vulnerable, to anything that comes to him from his surroundings. The child is affected even in his physical organism.”*

*- Margaret Meyerkort, Master Waldorf Kindergarten Teacher*

Prairie Hill Waldorf School is dedicated to nurturing children’s capacities of imagination, healthy emotional development, independent thinking and positive action. In recognizing the harmful effects that electronic entertainment can have on the development of these capacities, we ask parents/guardians to safeguard their children from such exposure. Electronic media includes but is not limited to television, cell phones, movies, videos, video games, radio, computer programs, and screen-time technology. One could say that the premise of Waldorf education is: “to everything there is season,” and the season of Childhood is for learning about the world firsthand.

Children must experience physical reality at the most basic level before they are removed from it by the media's interpretation of reality. They need to create in the world and to hear and see the world's response to their "creating." They also need to get bored, and learn how, when, and if to get out of their boredom. All of this is lost when they are being "entertained" passively in front of a screen. The content alone is not even the most damaging part of screen exposure. The effect on the child's developing brain and physical body is debilitating. Current brain research points to the all-important need for young children to move, play, and experience real human relationships, all of which they are robbed of by ever-increasing screen-time.

Beyond our own child's experience, the social network of the classroom and school are affected by our personal media choices on behalf of our child. Just as the creative, open free play and imagination of one child can enhance the experience of all, so too can undigested television, movie, or computer content negatively affect the quality of play, the content and tone of classroom and playground conversations, the creative thinking, and the innocence of all of our children. We put great value on the education our children receive here at Prairie Hill, and exposure to the media largely undermines our efforts.

You are strongly encouraged to become aware of the growing body of research about the negative effects of exposure to electronic media on children's brain development, social interactions, and learning capabilities and limit their child(ren)'s exposure to such.

## **Discipline**

*"The heart can think of no devotion better than being shore to the ocean; holding the line of one position, counting on endless repetition."*

*- Robert Frost*

The teachers at Prairie Hill are devoted to being the steady "shore" to the vicissitudes of childhood. We strive to maintain an atmosphere of safety, respect,

and community to support an imaginative learning environment. Each child is respected for the unique individual they are. Guidance is provided to the children in a positive manner to help them develop self-discipline, self-esteem, and respect for others.

Our approach to discipline is based on the Waldorf early childhood principles of **rhythm, imitation and reverence**. Maintaining a strong and reliable rhythm to each day and an orderly and predictable classroom environment resolves most discipline issues through prevention. The teachers seek first to model correct behavior, bringing the children along to right action. When inappropriate behavior occurs, the children are addressed according to their age and the nature of their disruption. Wherever possible, the children are involved in righting their wrongs, for instance, helping to mend a broken toy, or rubbing soothing lotion on a friend who was hurt. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child will stay close to the teacher, helping their work.

A student displaying behavior that is harmful to themselves or others or engages in behavior that results in a major disruption to the classroom routine, will be sent home for the remainder of the school day. A child who is disruptive not only affects his own school experience, but that of their classmates. Therefore, if a child's behavior becomes a regular disruption or poses a safety risk to themselves or others, the following discipline process will be followed:

- 1) The teacher contacts you and describes the situation. You may be asked to pick up the child early from school. If you are not available to pick up your child, you must have a back-up plan in place for someone else to pick up your child.
- 2) If the disruptive behavior continues, an **action plan** including a time frame will be developed and shared with you. The **action plan** could involve Prairie Hill's Care Group, the Learning Support Specialist, or others as needed.
- 3) A conference with the parents/guardians will be scheduled to discuss the situation.
- 4) The teacher will document (e.g., incident report form) and follow-up with the parents/guardians to communicate progress made based on the time frame outlined in the **action plan**. If progress is not being made, please refer to our Discipline-Dismissals Policy in [The Prairie Hill Waldorf School Family Handbook](#) as well as the Probation and Expulsion policies in your

contract, for more information.

## Communications

*"I do not like that man. I must get to know him better."*

*- Abraham Lincoln*

Good, open communication is a key element in the success of a Waldorf school. To facilitate good communication:

- Teachers maintain regular office hours for parent/guardian conversations and concerns.
- Teachers send out a class letter on a regular basis that is written specifically for the parents/guardians.
- Early Childhood parent/guardian meetings are held throughout the year.
- Extensive Teacher-Family conferences are scheduled twice a year.
- Phone conversations are available by arrangement with the teacher when needed.
- The school's newsletter (*The Weekly Update*) is emailed weekly.

It is vital for a healthy community that issues are brought to the appropriate person's attention for resolution and discussion. If your concern is with another member of the community, please go directly to the person(s) you have a concern with and have a conversation about your concerns/questions. If it does not get resolved, please follow our **Channels of Communication** process:

- 1) **Contact your Child's Teacher** – Your first point of contact should always be your child's teacher. The entire faculty has training in and a good understanding of the class and organizational structure within the school. The teacher may not be able to answer all questions but will direct you to the most appropriate person within the school to get your questions answered promptly.
- 2) **Contact The Community Liaison** – Secondly, please consult the Community Liaison for issues or questions that the class teacher is not able to address. (If your issue concerns the Community Liaison, consult

one of the Early Childhood or Grades Chairs.)

- 3) **Contact The Administrator** – Lastly, contact the Administrator. The Administrator’s role is to be a facilitator between all three bodies within the school – Board, Faculty and Families.

## **Rest and Sleep**

*“Take rest; a field that has rested gives a bountiful crop.”*

*- Ovid*

Being in school is both exciting and tiring for the children. You can help ease the transition by providing a nap or quiet time after lunch, and by using the time after dinner for calming activities leading into a bedtime ritual. We recommend that children take afternoon naps up until they reach first grade. However, if your child is no longer napping, we encourage you to provide quiet time every day after lunch. Pediatricians typically recommend 11 to 13 hours a night for children three to six years old. The hours before midnight provide the deepest and most rejuvenating sleep.

## **Potty Training**

Children in Wonder Garden and Kindergarten are expected to be completely potty trained. This means that they are expected to voice when they need to go to the bathroom and be capable of wiping themselves. This policy is in place because we are not a licensed day care center. As a school, we are not equipped with a diaper changing table/station or diapering supplies. If a child has three or more accidents within a three week timeframe, you will be contacted to review our [discipline policy](#). If another accident occurs during the probationary period, the child will be required to stay home until securely potty trained.

When accidents happen, the child will be removed from the classroom discreetly and escorted to the bathroom by a teacher who will assist the child in the removal of the soiled clothing. The child will be placed on the toilet and encouraged to

complete the action to ensure that the bladder/bowels have been completely emptied and then to wipe. If the child's underpants are excessively soiled they will be thrown away and the remainder of the soiled clothing will be returned in a plastic bag. Children who have accidents will never be humiliated or made to feel uncomfortable. We want the potty training process to be a happy and successful phase of your child's life. Note this policy is in place for everyone, as potty accidents are time consuming and take teachers away from others in the class, and can be a sanitary/health issue.

## **Nourishment**

*"Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food"*

*~Hippocrates*

We are pleased to offer wholesome, primarily organic lunches and snacks each day. Your teacher provides a copy of the planned meals and snacks as part of our weekly rhythm each year. If a child has a food allergy or special dietary needs, please contact the teacher and we will arrange for you to provide and inventory an alternative that is similar to what is being served for the appropriate day(s). We encourage "polite bites" in order for them to taste what is being served as we find that often a child welcomes new foods when they are introduced to it slowly and consistently. If there are concerns about eating habits, we will partner with you to determine plans for healthy eating habits. We ask for your understanding that we are not able logistically to accommodate food preferences that are not medically necessary. Thank you for partnering with us to build healthy eating habits in such an enriching communal manner.

## **Visiting the Early Childhood Classrooms**

Visitors are welcome when advance arrangements are made with the teachers and/or the school office. Visitors include parents, guardians, student teachers, teacher candidates, and others interested in Waldorf education. Visitors are usually given a task to perform while quietly joining the Wonder Garden or Kindergarten morning. A working adult brings a focused attention that enables the children to fully enter their play. Please refrain from using your cell phone, engaging in conversations and/or anything that could disrupt the teacher and students from their good work.

## After School Care Program

The Aftercare program is open to students who are currently enrolled in the school and are able to successfully complete their Wonder Garden or Kindergarten classroom program. This program has a lead teacher who is committed to working out of Waldorf principles, along with an assistant, depending on need. The program applies the same guiding Waldorf principles that are used in the classrooms so that the children feel secure in a caring environment which provides a regular rhythm to the day, periods of free play, structured activities, exercise, nourishment, and rest. Requirements for these programs include:

- attendance during the regular school-day program,
- ability to follow instructions in a group setting, and
- compliance to communicated rules.

Please remember that children who are sick are to remain at home. (See section on illness.) The Aftercare program is available from 3:15 p.m. until 5:15 p.m and complements school-day activities with a healthy snack, outdoor activities, games, crafts, free play, and clean up.

## Festival Life

*“Sound when stretched is music. Movement when stretched is dance. Mind when stretched is meditation. Life when stretched is celebration.”*

*– Ravi Shankar*

We embrace the changing rhythms of the calendar year through a variety of festivals and seasonal activities. The festival motifs are introduced in the classroom through storytelling, songs, movement (e.g., Eurythmy and Circle time), painting and crafting. Some of our festivals specifically focus on particular grade(s) while most are celebrated by the entire community in school-wide assemblies, student performances and entertaining fairs. It is the communal nature of the festivals that

connect parents/guardians, caregivers, faculty, staff, and alumni to the students for meaningful celebration and bonding of community ties. Some of our significant festivals include: The Festival of Courage (Michaelmas), The Festival of Community (Martinmas/Lantern Walk), The Festival of Light (Advent Spiral) and Mayfaire.

## First Grade Readiness

*“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.”*

*– Rachel Carson*

There are many factors that determine readiness for first grade. The Waldorf curriculum is uniquely designed to meet the children in the areas of physical, social/emotional, and intellectual development specific to their age. While individual students may show indications of readiness in certain areas of development, it is our belief that children more fully realize their potential when all three areas have reached a certain balance and maturity before beginning the formal academic rigors of first grade. Our pedagogy holds that this first phase of development takes a full seven years to reach maturity.

During the March Teacher-Family Conferences, your teacher will discuss First Grade Readiness with you. Prairie Hill’s school policy is that children must be 6 years of age by May 1st to be considered for first grade. We strongly believe that this is the age at which children are developmentally ready for first grade. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction requires that children be 6 years of age by September 1st. We strongly encourage families to thoughtfully consider Prairie Hill’s May 1st recommendation because it is the best way to ensure that your child’s developmental needs--academic, social and emotional--will be met by the Waldorf Curriculum. This recommendation applies for first grade as well as all subsequent grades. First Grade Readiness Assessments will be completed for each child who meets the age requirements. Following the successful completion of the assessment, the Kindergarten teacher makes her recommendation for advancement.

## **First Grade Readiness Assessments**

*“Sensory-motor development through the early years primes the developing brain for later learning.”*

*– Sally Goddard Blythe, Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology*

At Prairie Hill, it is our practice to conduct First Grade Assessments for those children moving on to first grade, or those we are considering for first grade entrance. This assessment allows us to note the tendencies, abilities, and challenges of the individual child and the class as a whole. It also helps us to more deeply understand the children, their strengths, and their needs.

The kindergarten teachers lead the children on an imaginative “journey” as they play their way through a story which asks them to perform a number of tasks, most of which are physical challenges, such as walking a balance beam or catching a ball. As current research reveals, academic learning rests on the foundation of a well integrated physical body. It is important that your child approach this journey as a playful happening, rather than a test. Be assured that we will not be putting any undue strain on the children, nor asking them any academic questions, i.e. number or letter facts. The journey itself takes approximately thirty to forty minutes and is scheduled within their kindergarten day. A summary of the observations gained from this assessment will be shared in the children’s end-of-year reports and with the first grade class teacher to aid in future planning.

## **Parent and Guardian Opportunities**

*“Alone, we can do so little; together we can do so much.”*

*– Helen Keller*

At Prairie Hill there are numerous ways for you to be involved. These include being on the Board of Trustees, participating on committees of interest (e.g., Marketing Committee, Building & Grounds, etc), participating in the Community Council meetings and/or events, fundraising, school or classroom cleaning days, special projects, and festivals. The class teachers, depending on need, may ask for

assistance at various times throughout the year.

Several class meetings are held throughout the year for parents/guardians of each class. Teachers publish those dates on the [School Calendar](#) and will inform parents/guardians of the dates in advance. It is important for at least one parent/guardian of each child to be present as these meetings provide an opportunity for the teacher to present an overview of what the children have done and will be doing, and provide you with the opportunity to come together to discuss the children's developmental stages and needs, ask questions, get to know one another and build community.

## Social Inclusion

*“A healthy social life is found only, when in the mirror of each soul the whole community finds its reflection, and when the whole community the virtue of each one is living.”*

*- Rudolf Steiner*

We are committed to promoting a social environment in which working, playing, and learning take place in ways that foster inclusiveness and recognize mutual humanity, even while addressing conflict. With this goal in mind, our school has adopted the Social Inclusion Approach brought to us by Kim John Payne, an educator who is respected worldwide for his work in justice without blame, building self-esteem and helping children deal with conflict and social issues. We invite you to actively participate in building and maintaining a healthy social life in our school community by being inclusive when planning your child(ren)'s activities. For example, when planning a birthday party, inviting all the children in the class so as not to exclude anyone.

*The Early Childhood Department wants to thank you for taking the time to read this Early Childhood Policy Handbook. It is our intention it will help you gain a better understanding of our commitment to your children.*

Revised 7-7-22

**YOUR NOTES...**

**Prairie Hill Waldorf School**  
N14 W29143 Silvernail Road Pewaukee, WI 53072-4855  
Phone: 262- 646-7497 Fax: 262- 646-7495  
[www.PHWS.org](http://www.PHWS.org)