



Parent Handbook

Revised July 1, 2022

Mission Statement and Purpose

The mission of Apple Valley School is to provide nature-based experiential education opportunities for children in the Lander community.

Purpose

With Waldorf principles at the center, Apple Valley School's programs nurture the whole student, awakening their thinking capacity, supporting the development of their tactile skills and habits, and guiding the healthy growth of their social and emotional life.

The purpose of the Apple Valley School is to provide a welcoming, educational space for children that:

- Honors and protects childhood.
- Allows children to develop in their own time and at their own pace.
- Instills a life-long love of learning.
- Fosters a love of nature and the arts alongside respect for others and the earth.
- Prepares children to meet the world in an engaged and curious way.

Program Description

Apple Valley School serves children 2 - 5 years old. One year olds are admitted on a case by case basis when a space is available that meets licensing requirements. Our hours are 7:45 AM to 3:15 PM, Monday through Friday during the year, with aftercare until 5:15 PM each day. Tuition includes a hearty mid-morning snack and an afternoon snack during aftercare. Parents provide a packed lunch each day.

Tuition and Enrollment Process

Enrollment process includes:

- Completing the waitlist application form.
- Paying a \$50.00 application fee.
- Conversation with the teacher to discuss the child's biography, the policies in this handbook, the expectations of our program and the child's attendance schedule.
- Completion of all release and waiver forms. Completion of tuition contract. And completion of a questionnaire about the child.
- Complete and sign our Media Recommendations form.

Once enrollment is complete, the first month's tuition is to be paid in full. Parents enrolling their child will follow all policies set by the school which reserves the right to terminate service for reasons of non-cooperation, delinquency of tuition payment in excess of \$200.00, or the inability of the child or parent to adjust to our program.

Tuition

Parents will sign an annual contract enrolling children for participation on set days of the week. Tuition is billed monthly, in advance, at an agreed upon monthly tuition rate and is due between the 1st and 5th of each month. If a child's enrollment begins mid month, tuition for the first month of their school year will be prorated. If at any time, tuition payments fall in arrears, we expect you to discuss the plan for payment with us. If the past-due amount exceeds \$200.00 and other arrangements have not been made, the child will not be permitted to attend until tuition is paid in full. In order to retain the rhythm of the day for all children, we do not offer make-up days. Tuition is not reimbursed for holidays, sick days, or family vacations. We cannot pause tuition for families choosing to travel outside of school holidays and canceling your tuition for travel time will result in forfeiting your spot. Our programs *will* run through the summer with some breaks for teachers. Summer programming may be billed differently and allow for more flexibility when it comes to pausing billing plans and changing attendance schedules without losing your spot. Summer tuition adjustments will be managed on a case by case basis. Additional Summer Camp programs may also be scheduled and will be announced in the spring. See our Tuition Contract in a separate document for more tuition information..

Communication

We welcome opportunities to discuss your child with you and if at any time you have concerns, please contact your lead classroom teacher using their preferred communication method and during their preferred parent communication times. We will schedule parent conferences once per semester but hope you will let us know of any changes in your home or family, as they will surely affect your child's day.

Our faculty will continue to post their thoughts on child development and education in our newsletter and at www.applevalleyschool.org along with pertinent articles from other sources. Please share any articles you've found inspiring so that we can pass them along to others. Parent meetings will also be scheduled throughout the year both to plan for community seasonal celebrations and to share ideas about parenting, education, and child development.

We will share the list of enrolled children, their parents, siblings and contact information with families so that you can contact one another for play dates outside of school, carpool for drop-off or pick-up, or share babysitting when school is not in session. If you do not wish to be included in this list, please notify us.

The Apple Valley School celebrates diversity in all its beautiful forms. With the help and direction of parents, we will accommodate children with special needs whenever possible.

Parent Participation, Seasonal Celebrations, and Birthdays

Parents are strongly encouraged to spend an observation morning with us participating in the daily outing, snack, and story. This will "show you" more about our program than any amount of "telling" could do. Please follow the teacher's lead while observing, leaving the children to engage in their work of play while you and the teacher engage in adult work. In some cases, we may encourage you to observe the class that your own child is *not* in so that they are not so distracted by your presence.

We also encourage community and caregiver participation in our programs and ask that families commit to 2 hours of volunteer time per semester (summer, fall, and spring) to help us with projects at the school. This

could include building shelves, website design, fundraising, festival preparation, etc. depending on the skills in your family.

The rhythm of the child's year depends upon creating and anticipating seasonal events and we have found that parents relish participation in these seasonal celebrations as well. We will invite you to join us in planning and creating a Harvest Fest in September, a Lantern Walk in November, a Winter Spiral in December, and a May Fair celebration in May. These festival traditions are common seasonal celebrations in Waldorf Schools worldwide and the children look forward to them with great anticipation.

Your child's birthday is also a special day both at home and at school. We will invite the families of the older preschool groups to join us in honoring your child's birthday during morning snack time at the school. The toddlers will celebrate only with their classmates and teachers since the coming and going of visitors can feel very disruptive to our youngest children. Birthday parties outside of school that include everyone may be right for your child and family, but not for every child. When planning a smaller party, please try to be sensitive to the families who are not invited.

Practical Matters

School-year Calendar

We will be closed on public school holidays plus one additional day each semester. When the Lander School District announces a snow day, our school will be closed as well. We will publish a calendar for the year prior to the start of the school year and work to stick to it, though some adjustments may occur out of necessity.

In Case of Emergencies

In an emergency, parents will be notified via text message, Brightwheel, phone call, or email of the incident.

If we must evacuate the school grounds, we will relocate across Eugene Street to the patio in front of the Fremont County Court House (450 N. 2nd Street). The Court House phone number is 307-332-3239. After an evacuation, you will be called to pick up your child from the Court House via the main parking lot. Be sure to sign out and speak with your child's teacher before leaving. Teachers will stay with the children until all children have been reunited with their families. If we are unable to reach you and you do not pick up your child in the specified time, your child will be taken to Maureen Fox's home at 586 Sweetwater Street, Lander, 970-618-8831.

A *Be Prepared* kit will travel with the school staff to all locations at all times when they leave the school. It will contain: A communication device, health and emergency forms for each child, drinking water appropriate energy foods, first aid kit including a thermometer, allergy medication, and any individual child's medications, bathroom materials, and a change of clothes.

Daily, Weekly and Yearly Rhythms

Each day, each week, and each year in the Apple Valley School has a predictable rhythm that the children anticipate and live into. It is the basis for our discipline and for the healthy development of the child's physical body and energy. Each day includes time outdoors as well as a hearty snack. Independent play, an artistic activity, a circle, and a story are part of each morning. Lunch and rest round out the day. Artistic activities

include coloring, sensory exploration, simple crafts, beeswax modeling, and painting. Aftercare includes an afternoon snack, exploratory play, an optional story book time and frequently a seasonal activity.

The weekly rhythm is notated by activities and snacks. Each day children will participate in snack preparations. Our snacks are the same each week and children come to look forward to and anticipate the days of the week through these rhythmic activities.

Additionally, the year is marked with seasonal celebrations that the children also look forward to and develop a sense of security in knowing what is to come.

Daily Community Chores

Children participate in the daily care of our school by watering the garden, weeding the garden, feeding the chickens, gathering eggs, sweeping, setting the table, etc. These practices help the children feel a sense of connection and ownership over the wellness of their own being and that of the other children and school as a whole.

Daily Walk

Each group chooses a daily walk schedule. Toddlers occasionally take a short walk from school while older groups take a walk from school to the Riverwalk or Popo Agie River Park each day. Teachers document attendance before leaving and after returning as well as several times during the outing. Children walk along sidewalks holding onto a group rope until we all reach our destination for the day. Once we have arrived, children are instructed about the play boundaries and teachers watch them closely and count them often to ensure that all children abide by the physical boundaries that the teachers have established.

Meals and Snacks

Water is available to the children all day. We will eat a hearty snack between 9:30-10:00 AM, lunch between 12:00 and 1:00 PM and a light snack at 3:15 during aftercare. Mealtime is a social time and in a home-like manner, we prepare the meal space together and sit together for a blessing before eating. Children eat the lunch their parents pack and do not share with others. *Please do not send sweets or juice drinks.*

Morning Snack Menu

Monday	Millet with butter, shredded cheddar cheese, nutritional yeast and cucumbers on the side.
Tuesday	Oats with shredded carrots and raisins, topped with heavy cream and maple syrup.
Wednesday	Homemade bread muffins with butter and honey with apples and celery on the side.
Thursday	Vegetable Soup with leftover bread muffins from Wednesday. Soup ingredients could include: olive oil, onions, garlic, celery, carrots, eggplant, zucchini, turnip, asparagus, broccoli, greens, sweet and regular potatoes, cauliflower, peas, beets, kale, chard, cabbage, squash, mushrooms, peppers, herbs and garbanzo beans. Soup is seasoned with Better Than Bullion.
Friday	Rice with Braggs Amino Acid, butter, eggs with sugar snap peas on the side.

What to pack for lunch?

A balanced lunch includes all five food groups:

Protein: meat, beans, eggs, lentils, nuts, tofu, hummus

Vegetable: celery, carrots, cucumbers, broccoli, sweet potato

Grain: rice, bread, pasta, quinoa

Fruit: apple, banana, orange, pear, plums, kiwi, berries

Dairy: milk, cheese, sugar-free yogurt

With toddler sized portions, this could look like: 1 ounce of meat, 1/4 cup of vegetables, 1 piece of bread, 1/2 cup of fruit, and 1/2 cup of dairy.

Adequate nutrition is necessary for brain and physical development. The foods going into these little bodies influence their behaviors and emotional wellbeing. (Has anyone experienced the meltdowns that come with the lack of substantial food?) There will be days when exceptions will have to be made, but do strive to pack foods that provide nutrition and build healthy eating habits.

Fostering healthy eating habits is easiest when children are young. School lunch is a particularly useful time to try new things as they see their peers enjoying foods that they may refuse at home. It is enticing to see a friend savoring their goat cheese or gobbling up their spinach. Soup day is an excellent example of the children trying new veggies based on peer influence. The children love to announce when they are eating something the same as their friends or something new they have packed.

Children won't always eat everything you pack in their lunch, but every lunch should include the five main food groups. Your child always has the option to meet their nutritional needs or, at the very least, practice recognizing what is nutritious.

While selecting foods for their lunch, focus on whole, non processed foods. Generally the less processed a food is the more balanced it will be in nutrient to calorie ratio. The children will have ample opportunities to eat processed and sugary foods, school shouldn't be that time. Also keep in mind that the children nap after lunch; sugary yogurt drinks, jellos, and granola bars can make settling down difficult as their body burns through the added sugars.

Aftercare Snack Menu

A serving of nuts, fruit, and vegetable daily

Nuts could include	walnuts, almonds, cashews, pecans
Vegetables could include	celery, carrots, broccoli, green beans, peas, sweet potato, cucumber
Fruits could include	apples, watermelon, oranges, grapes, peaches, strawberries

On occasion, the following foods may also be served in our snacks:

Peanut butter	Peas
Sunflower seeds	Beets
Raisins	Tomatoes
Garbanzo beans	Plain Yogurt
Lemon	Pretzels
Garlic	Sesame Sticks
Olive Oil	Banana Chips
Peaches	Eggs
Pineapple	Watermelon
Banana	Strawberries
Spinach	Oranges/Mandarin Oranges
Ground Flaxseed	Apple Cider Vinegar
Whole Wheat Flour	Maple Syrup
Cinnamon	Olive Oil
Nutmeg	Vanilla
Baking Powder	Banana
Baking Soda	Pumpkin
Salt	Zucchini
Almond Milk	

Snacks from the Apple Valley School Garden

Carrots	Turnips
Squash	Potatoes
Spinach	Pumpkins
Kale	Strawberries
Peas	Assorted Herbs - mint, basil, chives, rosemary,
Garlic	thyme, oregano, sage, parsley, dill
Beets	

Nap Time and Suggestions for Healthy Sleep at Home

Apple Valley will supply rest mats or *pack-n-plays* for nap time. Each family should provide a warm blanket or sleeping bag, pillow, pillow case. (A stuffed animal can be included if your child finds it comforting, but we don't recommend sending something that is too precious and would be missed at bedtime if accidentally left at school.) Bedding will be sent home weekly to be laundered and returned again at the beginning of the week.

All children will sleep (or rest silently) during nap. The toddlers' nap time is from 12:00-2:30pm. The three year olds' nap time is from 12:30-2:30pm. The preschoolers' nap time is from 1:00-2:30pm.

Daytime sleep allows children to reset. Physically, their bodies need time to recuperate and grow and their brains need the opportunity to process and consolidate all that they have learned. Adequate sleep is

essential for brain development and regulated behaviors. Children thrive in having a predictable schedule. Eating, bathrooming, and sleeping at the same time everyday (including weekends) helps set their circadian rhythm. A consistent routine increases a child's feeling of security and develops a sense of time, and confidence in knowing what to expect. Children with predictable routines are less stressed, more cooperative, and less overwhelmed and cranky. The Centers for Disease Control along with most pediatricians recommend 11-14 hours of quality sleep per day for one and two year olds and 10-13 hours for 3- 5 year olds. This recommendation is for actual sleep time and children often need additional time to wind down and relax prior to sleep and some need extra time to fully awaken. Aiming for a 7:00pm bedtime is ideal for children attending school. If your family has multiple children in the same room, it can be beneficial to stagger bedtimes so they are not keeping each other awake.

There tends to be a window of time when children will easily fall asleep as their body winds down, if you miss this opportunity, a child with a "second wind" can be extra challenging to get to sleep creating a pattern of overtiredness and chronic fatigue. Besides watching carefully to observe when your child gets sleepy, it can be helpful to create a soothing bedtime routine so your child knows what is going to happen and does not have to guess if tonight it will be "straight to sleep" or "read-all-the-books-in-the-house" time. Teaching your child to settle down and relax is a skill they will need for the rest of their life (and it can also give you well deserved peaceful time too.)

Ideas for a bedtime ritual:

- dim the lights, slow activities, turn off loud/over-stimulating activities at least an hour before bedtime
- set out clothes for the following day
- preview what may happen tomorrow, perhaps offer a suggestion of how to make it a great day
- tell or read a story (benign soothing repetitive stories are best at bedtime)
- cuddle and softly review the events of the day, highlighting acts of kindness or beauty in nature
- massage on the feet, back, or hands, gentle rocking, or squeezing and counting fingers/toes
- sing a calm bedtime song or say a blessing for the night

If your child gets out of bed, calmly and lovingly take their hand and return them without engaging in conversation. At this age, many children want to know what the boundaries are, "Are you really in charge? Are there scary things in the night I need to be afraid of?" "How many more books can we read?" It is reassuring if you consistently hold your limits and mean what you say. In doing this, your child can rest easily feeling safe and secure knowing that they do not need to constantly be "testing the waters."

Media Recommendations

We strive for the students to learn and experience life deeply and authentically utilizing all of their senses. Screen time over stimulates the visual sense and tends to discourage first hand exploration of the world around us. We strongly discourage the use of media or screen time at home and do not use screens in any of our teaching methods. We ask all families to abide by and sign our Media Recommendations document as part of our enrollment process.

Discipline

Our discipline policy rests on the use of the three R's of early childhood: Rhythm, Ritual and Repetition. When adults proactively provide a calm atmosphere, positive reinforcement, and clear consistent boundaries, the children know what to expect and are much less likely to act inappropriately. When needed, the teachers will calmly redirect the child to another activity or have her/him join in the teacher's work until the child can return

to play. Teachers will role model empathy and sympathy. For instance, if one child hits another on the head, the teacher will comfort the injured child, say to them, *"I'm so sorry you're hurt"* and ask the child who hit to go to the freezer and get an ice pack to help sooth the injured child. This request allows the child, who has hit, to participate in reconciliation. In more serious situations, the teacher may accompany the child who has inflicted pain by sitting with them and taking several deep, calming breaths. If a child's behavior is disruptive to the group's activity, the teacher may bring the child to the side to calm down until they are ready to rejoin their classmates.

Transitions and Daily Schedule

As you know from home life, going from one activity to another can create challenges for both parents and children. Arrivals and departures, therefore, require care and prior planning on the part of adults. Parents of their first preschoolers are just beginning to adjust to a school schedule, a schedule they'll maintain for all of their child-rearing years. We are happy to offer suggestions for home rhythms and rituals to help develop good habits in these early years that will pay off in the years ahead. At school, we adhere to a predictable schedule, which we ask our parents to respect and foster daily.

All children will be greeted in their classrooms between 7:45 AM and 8:15 AM appropriately dressed for a day outside. Please be sure your child completes their first morning chores which the teacher will instruct and which vary slightly depending on the season. The child should then come to greet the teacher before they join the play. Parents are required to sign their children in and out every day using our daycare management software Brightwheel or using an individual sign-in/out-sheet.

Only a parent or a person designated as an "approved pick-up" can pick your child up from school unless you provide written permission to the teachers for someone else to pick them up. Please send a message through Brightwheel with the approved person's name on days that your child will be picked up by someone who is not already listed with us. This includes grandparents and other parents within the school. Our teachers will ask to see their ID unless they already know the person. And they will need to sign our sign-out sheet. Unless your child is in aftercare, we reserve the right to implement a late fee for late pick-up after 3:15 PM. If a child has not been picked up by 5:15 PM and you have been unable to notify us, your child will be taken to the home of Maureen Fox at 586 Sweetwater Street, Lander, 970-618-8831.

Clothing and Treasures

We ask that children wear simple clothing that allows them to have free and full range of movement throughout the day and that they can get dirty and messy. We also prefer that children's clothes do not have media images as these can become focusses of play rather than allowing children freedom to imagine their play. And we prefer that children not wear light-up shoes as they often become a distraction during focus times like circles and stories.

Warmth is vital to healthy physical development and we ask parents to layer for warmth, being sensitive to how our weather can change from hour to hour. In addition, please provide and leave in your child's cubby, a complete change of clothes, and slippers for indoor use.

Sometimes toys, books and treasures come to visit us from home, but they are almost always better left at home where they will not be lost, damaged or coveted. However, if your child would like to share a special treasure, please speak to the teacher about it first.

Wellness and Illness

All children are required to have a medical exam on a yearly basis. Immunization records or choices not to immunize must be shared with the school alongside medical forms that will be completed upon enrollment. All medical records shared with the school are confidential. As a school, we take seriously the health of our whole community. We ask that each family recognize the impact that their personal choices have on our school community, our Lander community, and even our global community. We are seeing now, more than ever before, how our personal and family health care choices can have a rippling effect. We ask that you notify us of any communicable diseases your child contracts including common colds and flus. Children who are unvaccinated for illness for which vaccines are available may be asked to stay out of school for extended periods if communicable diseases for which they are unvaccinated, are present in the school or in the county. Some communicable diseases such as COVID-19, hepatitis, measles, and mumps must be reported to local health authorities.

Sick children are much better off at home: fever, cough, runny nose, diarrhea, vomiting or unexplained rashes are reasons for keeping your child home. If your child becomes ill while in our care, you will be notified and they will be kept in a warm, quiet place until you arrive to pick them up. Please be sure your child is fever-free for 24 hours before returning to us. If a child has been cleared by a physician to return and is on medication that must be administered during the day, the medication must be brought to the teacher in its original container with the physician's instructions and parents must fill out an authorization form.

Teachers also will monitor themselves for infectious illness and remain at home while contagious.

The use of sunscreen, insect repellent, essential oils or over-the-counter topical medications require a signed parent consent form.

Children with special health care needs (i.e. food or other allergies, asthma, seizures, diabetes, etc.) must have a written care plan. Please create this care plan with your child's teacher and each teacher will share that plan with the faculty as a whole.

Additionally, every childcare facility is required by law to report any suspected instance of child abuse to the Department of Family Services.

COVID-19

As we navigate the public health threat of COVID-19, we are committed to adhering closely to the recommendations of the CDC for child care facilities as well as those of the state health officials. We have published our Coronavirus Risk Management Practices and will continue to adjust them as information becomes available about best practices. Please see that document for questions regarding our cleaning practices, how we manage sick students, our closure plan, etc. We will continue to seek guidance from local medical professionals, families, the CDC, and the Department of Family Services. These practices will be regularly adjusted and parents will be notified of adjustments as we continue to learn more about this illness and its prevalence within our community.

Additional Policies

Weapons

Firearms, ammunition, archery equipment, explosives or any type of weapon are prohibited, except by law enforcement, on the school campus at all times.

Suspension/Expulsion Policy

It is our goal, at the Apple Valley School, to create a warm, nurturing environment where children are able to feel comfortable in their own skin. If a child is struggling with behaviors that are disruptive to other children's sense of comfort and wellbeing, we will work with families to find adjustments. We will begin by working collaboratively as a teaching team to find trends and make adjustments to our schedule and classroom management that support the child. We will then ask families to be involved in adjustments such as sleep patterns, eating habits, and other home practices. If our collective work to support the child does not result in changes in behavior and that behavior continues to excessively disrupt a supportive environment for other children, we will create a written adjustment plan with a date of suspension by which behavior change needs to occur. We reserve the right to suspend or expel a child under these circumstances.

Liability Insurance

Apple Valley School carries liability insurance that covers the operations of a child care program.

Reporting Concerns

It is our goal to maintain open communication that is centered around how to best support the healthy growth and development of each child. We will send home regular communication to families about what is happening in the school classrooms. We will make ourselves available to conversations with parents and caregivers regarding their specific child. We hope that you will bring your concerns directly to the teachers. If you find that your concerns cannot be resolved after conversation with the teacher, you can contact any board member of the Apple Valley School to voice a concern and begin a resolution process. If these avenues for resolution are not successful, you can report concerns to the Department of Family Services licensing agent at 307-857-9282 or by email at tresa.king@wyo.gov. You can also obtain complaint and compliance history for Apple Valley School at <http://dfs.wyo.gov> (select 'find childcare').