

TARA REDWOOD SCHOOL

Parent Handbook



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I. MISSION STATEMENT

Empowering children to make a positive difference in the world.

Tara Redwood School provides a curriculum and environment that nurtures the innate positive qualities within each child. The school strives to stimulate an intense interest and joy of learning and present an opportunity for each child to fully explore her/his particular areas of interest. We provide a program that addresses not only our students' various talents but, just as importantly, their emotional and inner development. Our school strives to develop the 'whole child': mental, physical and spiritual.

Our children are the leaders of tomorrow and they will be faced with many new challenges and opportunities as they move into the future.

We combine educational approaches and methodologies that focus not only on assisting the children to develop intellectually but, additionally, their understanding of the interdependence of all things. Through an understanding of this interconnectedness among people, and with the environment they live in, the child is better suited to help create a harmonious world community. It is our intent that our students develop an altruistic attitude, knowledge, skill and confidence in themselves as capable beings able to make a positive difference in the world. It is our hope that through our program our students will develop a strong awareness and appreciation of the cultural and religious diversity that exists in the world and an acceptance of the similarities and differences therein.

II. PHILOSOPHY

We offer a curriculum based on the pedagogical approaches of Montessori and other inquiry-based methodologies such as, Constructivism and Universal Education. As each child has their own unique personality and interests, it is our aim to provide a curriculum that inspires and nurtures their various needs. Our multi-age, open classroom style allows children to fully explore and pursue their special areas of interest. We therefore offer a program with a stimulating math and language curriculum, as well as a program rich in arts and sciences. Our curriculum is theme-oriented and we access the wonderful resources we have in our families and community to make our learning as experiential and stimulating as possible.

We believe that education does not begin and end in the classroom. All experiences and aspects of life are a part of what contributes to formulating one's view of the world. This is one reason we find field trips an important activity of the learning process. Furthermore, it is essential for home and school to form an alliance with skillful communication acting as a bridge.

Tara Redwood School admits students of any race, color, nationality, ethnic origin and religion, to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, or national/ethnic origin in administration of our educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, athletic and other school-administered programs.

III. TARA REDWOOD SCHOOL VALUES

Tara Redwood School bases its curriculum on the following values.

1. Insight
 - Develop a deeper understanding of our unlimited potential
 - Develop awareness of the effects of our actions on oneself, others and the environment
 - Understanding our emotions in order to exercise the freedom to make skilful, compassionate and helpful choices.
2. Authentic Speech
 - Speaking words that are helpful, kind, encouraging and complimentary.
 - Refraining from speaking words with ill intent *i.e.*, divisive speech, lying, gossip, harsh speech, name-calling, belittling, and exclusion.
3. Kindheartedness
 - Showing respect and compassion for all living beings (creatures great and small).
 - Taking responsibility for helping others whenever possible.
 - Being mindful to not harm others.
4. Generosity
 - Practicing generosity and sharing with our material belongings, our knowledge, our time and resources.
 - Not taking that which has not been offered or does not belong to you.
5. Tolerance
 - Practicing patience, respect, acceptance and forgiveness of differences.
 - Not responding with anger, jealousy, pride or resentment.

IV. ESSENTIAL EDUCATION

A. The Specific Goals of Essential Education

Essential Education seeks to develop the whole person; as a result, it has the following goals.

1. To foster the qualities of loving kindness, compassion, and universal responsibility.
2. To cultivate respectful behavior toward all living beings
3. To present a balanced integrated program of learning activities and experiences that addresses the physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual domains of the person.
4. To transmit the universal elements of wisdom from different cultures and traditions through an understanding of both the material (external) and spiritual (internal) aspects of reality.
5. To develop ethical behavior based on an understanding of the interrelatedness of all phenomena.
6. To develop an understanding of:
 - The nature and functioning of the mind and its projections
 - The nature and source of emotions and how to work with them

B. Essential Education Pedagogy

The pedagogy developed by Tara Redwood School and Essential Education includes the following.

1. Knowledge of the inner world of thoughts, feelings and emotions is as important as knowledge of the outer world
2. An integrated and interdisciplinary approach to learning is preferable to one that fragments and divides knowledge
3. Individuals often have dramatically different learning styles; all learning styles are valid and must be both acknowledged and nurtured.
4. Learning rooted in direct experience far surpasses in depth and endurance learning by indirect methods

5. Generally accepted subject matter can be enhanced by integrating a Universal Education approach and accompanying methods and techniques
6. The intuitive wisdom of the individual can be developed by dialectical discussion and debate exploring philosophical, spiritual and moral themes.
7. All aspects of life present opportunities for learning

V. FACULTY AND CURRICULUM

All of our teachers are Montessori trained and/or hold a credential in education, and undergo continuing educational training throughout the year. We also incorporate a variety of special interest teachers from our community in the fields of science, art, music and physical education. All our teachers meet the highest academic and personal standards, and are dedicated to the ideals and principles under which Tara Redwood School operates. During our biannual parent/teacher conferences, your child's specific academic curriculum and social, emotional and physical development will be addressed and goals outlined based on the strengths, needs and aspirations of each individual child. Our teachers are also always available to meet with you at other times throughout the school year to discuss your child's specific needs and progress.

VI. CORPORATE STRUCTURE

Tara Redwood School is a California non-profit secular educational corporation. The school is a legal affiliate of the international non-profit organization, the FPMT, (Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition). Our corporation consists of a Board of Directors, which meets monthly to handle school policy and administration. The Board of Directors consists of the following people:

President: Neil Christopherson
Treasurer: Chuck Walbridge
Secretary: Pam Cayton
Bev Gwym, Amanda Dofflemyer, Lilian Brito

VII. PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parents are encouraged to participate in various aspects of the school's operations. We are a community of people working together to develop a unique and inspiring learning environment for our children.

Families agree to volunteer 30 hours of participation a year. A few of the many activities that fall into this category would be driving for field trips, working in the classroom or participating in a fundraiser. Parents will record their hours on a time card located in your child's class. Your Classroom Representative, will contact you and discuss events and activities with which you can get involved.

Throughout the year we offer a series of Parent Education evenings. Participation in these classes offers parents an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the philosophy and principles that guide the work at Tara. We will also offer ideas and strategies for positive parenting that empowers both parent and child to co-create compassionate cultures. We encourage parents to attend as many of these as possible as it will provide a stronger, more cohesive bridge between home and school.

As with most schools, fundraising and parent participation is an important part of our success. Our fundraising committee is a team of parents and board members. At the beginning of each year we create a fund-raising calendar. We try to have activities that do not require an enormous amount of extra time and money, as we know how hard that can be to come by! It is our hope that parents participate in as many of these as practical.

The SCRIP program is an on-going fundraising program. We ask all families to participate in this simple **no cost** fundraiser. A percentage of SCRIP money our parents spend at local stores such as Nob Hill, New Leaf, Albertsons, Gottschalks and Safeway goes to benefit the school. Recently, Tara Redwood School established a policy offering the percentage raised from Safeway E-Scrip as a scholarship allowance to individual participants. SCRIP is a way to contribute to the school without spending any additional time or money. This money goes directly to the classroom supplies budget and helps to keep our tuition low. Please contact the SCRIP representative, Elisabeth Rector for more details about the program.

VIII. CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

If you have any concerns, questions or conflicts, we request parents to please follow this 'Conflict Resolution Procedure.'

Parents Case 1 - issue regarding a non-teaching staff member:

Resolution path: Staff member->School Administrator->Board

1. Express your issue to the staff member assuming from the start that both of you are ultimately interested in resolving the situation. Include your concern, how it impacts you, your child, and/or the school.
2. Express any suggestions you would like to have considered.
3. Agree on a time by which this issue will be addressed.
4. If the situation goes unanswered, unresolved, or fails to show satisfactory movement towards resolution by the agreed upon time, then escalate the issue to the school administrator following the same process as shown in steps 1-3.
5. If the situation goes unanswered, unresolved, or fails to show satisfactory movement towards resolution by the agreed upon time, then escalate the issue in letter form to the school Board following the same process as shown in steps 1-3.

Parents Case 2 - issue regarding the teaching assistant:

Resolution path: TA->Head Teacher->School Administrator->Board

1. Express your issue to the TA assuming from the start that both of you are ultimately interested in resolving the situation. Include your concern, how it impacts you, your child, and/or the school.
2. Express any suggestions you would like to have considered.

3. Agree on a time by which this issue will be addressed.
4. If the situation goes unanswered, unresolved, or fails to show satisfactory movement towards resolution by the agreed upon time, then escalate the issue to the head teacher following the same process as shown in steps 1-3.
5. If the situation goes unanswered, unresolved, or fails to show satisfactory movement towards resolution by the agreed upon time, then escalate the issue to the school administrator following the same process as shown in steps 1-3.
6. If the situation goes unanswered, unresolved, or fails to show satisfactory movement towards resolution by the agreed upon time, then escalate the issue in letter form to the school Board following the same process as shown in steps 1-3.

Parents Case 3 - issue regarding the head teacher:

Resolution path: Head Teacher->School Administrator->Board

1. Express your issue to the head teacher assuming from the start that both of you are ultimately interested in resolving the situation. Include your concern, how it impacts you, your child, and/or the school.
2. Express any suggestions you would like to have considered.
3. Agree on a time by which this issue will be addressed.
4. If the situation goes unanswered, unresolved, or fails to show satisfactory movement towards resolution by the agreed upon time, then escalate the issue to the school administrator following the same process as shown in steps 1-3.
5. If the situation goes unanswered, unresolved, or fails to show satisfactory movement towards resolution by the agreed upon time, then escalate the issue in letter form to the school Board following the same process as shown in steps 1-3.

Parents Case 4 - issue regarding the school administrator:

Resolution path: School Administrator->Board

1. Express your issue to the school administrator assuming from the start that both of you are ultimately interested in resolving the situation. Include your concern, how it impacts you, your child, and/or the school.
2. Express any suggestions you would like to have considered.
3. Agree on a time by which this issue will be addressed.
4. If the situation goes unanswered, unresolved, or fails to show satisfactory movement towards resolution by the agreed upon time, then escalate the issue in letter form to the school Board following the same process as shown in steps 1-3.

IX. TUITION POLICY

Tara Redwood School is entirely dependent on its tuition to pay teachers and meet the school's monthly operational expenses. Tuition is calculated on a ten-month school year, September through June. Tuition is due on the first of each month. If payment has not been received by the tenth a \$20 dollar late fee will be charged. Please contact the Administrator if you wish to discuss any issues concerning tuition payment.

If tuition is delinquent in excess of 60 days, and an acceptable alternative agreement has not been approved, your child will not be permitted to return to school until all delinquent obligations have been paid in full.

A **\$400 non-refundable registration fee** is due at the beginning of each school year.

X. DISCIPLINE

The teachers at Tara Redwood School use a positive discipline approach when dealing with all behavioral difficulties. That is, we establish clear boundaries and expectations through creative discussion with the children. Making sure students clearly understand the rules, teachers remain consistent, respectful, firm, and loving in the maintaining of the agreed-upon standards. Logical and natural consequences are employed whenever appropriate. We also follow a system of positive conflict resolution. This may include any of the following:

1. Individual discussions with the child/children involved: At this time each person's view will be clearly reviewed. A brainstorming session will follow that will look at possible solutions and alternative methods of dealing with such situations should they arise in the future.
2. If a child is disruptive or acting in a disrespectful way, rather than stop the whole class, the teacher may ask the child to excuse her/himself temporarily from the room or group. The child will return to the group when s/he has made the decision that s/he is able to act in a cooperative and collaborative manner.

3. Continued disruptive or aggressive behavior will result in a parent/teacher/student meeting.
4. On rare occasions a child may be asked to remain at home for a period of time until s/he is ready to return to school with an agreement to improve the specified behavior.
5. If the child's disruptive behavior continues, Tara Redwood School reserves the right to request the family to find a more suitable school for their child.

XI. SCHOOL HOURS

Please call if your child is going to be absent. Your child may be absent due to an illness, and this is very important information for the teacher to know so they may assess if other students have been exposed and are at risk.

School hours are **9:00am - 3:00pm** for preschool.

8:45am - 2:45pm for primary

8:30am - 3:00pm for elementary

- We ask that you please be punctual. Late arrivals are disruptive to the class and also make it hard for your child to adjust to the routine of the day. If a family is consistently late the teacher and/or director will arrange a meeting with the parents to try to design a constructive solution.
- If you are running late in the afternoon, please call and let the After-School teacher know when to expect you. Your child will automatically be checked in to After-School Care at 3:00 for primary class and 3:15 pm for preschool and elementary class and you will be charged for one hour.
- There is a sign-in/sign-out sheet for each class. All children must be signed in and out.

XII. POINTS to REMEMBER

- We encourage car-pooling for a number of reasons:
 1. We wish to minimize the impact on the road or neighbors.
 2. It allows for a more efficient drop-off and pick-up by not over-crowding our parking lot.
 3. Less cars = less pollution.
- We ask that parents travel slowly on the road. Our suggested 'safe' speed is 15-20 mph. Our neighbors are extremely appreciative of our slow driving!
- Snacks and lunches are brought from home. A roster system will be implemented in the Preschool and Kindergarten classrooms to allow all the families the opportunity to contribute to the morning snack.
- We ask that parents please pack healthy snacks and lunches with little or no sugar. There is a microwave in each classroom, but we ask that parents please put a note on your child's lunch box to let the teacher know that there is a warm-up needed.
- Children's clothing should be comfortable and practical. It is good for children to come well equipped with waterproof gear during wet weather. Even if it is raining, children need and like to get exercise and fresh air.
- We ask that children leave toys at home. Toys can cause conflicts and undue stress. However, if a child has an item that is related to the topic they are studying at school they may bring it to share with the class under the teacher's direction.

XIII. EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

In case of an emergency requiring moving our staff and student body off-site, we at Tara feel well equipped:

- If Prescott Road is closed, we will shuttle the children to Pam's house at 5200 Glen Haven Road where parents can pick their children up. Pam's # 462-0311.
- In extreme cases, we have the added advantage of a fully equipped retreat center next door!

We will notify parents of the arrangements at the soonest possible time. In the event of an earthquake when phone lines are jammed, it is often easier to call out of state. The number you could call is the **FPMT** International Office in Portland, at **503-808-1588**. Our staff will remain with your children until they have been reunited with the appropriate parents and family.

XIV. WELLNESS POLICY

If your child is showing any of the following symptoms we ask that he/she **remain at home**:

(FEVER) Has a fever of 99 F or above. Has had a fever within the last 24 hours.

(COLDS) Has a runny nose (clear, white, yellow or green discharge) and this condition is less than three days old. Show other signs of oncoming cold - glassy or watering eyes, listlessness, etc.

(COUGH) Has WET wheezy cough which, through the mucus, could spread viral or bacterial infection. Unless child has had cough for more than 2 days, is otherwise feeling well and has been treated (if necessary) for 48 hours or more.

(EYES) Discharge (green or white) from the eyes usually accompanied by redness and itching (possible "Pink Eye" or conjunctivitis). Will not be admitted with discharge EVEN if taking medication.

(THROAT) Evidence or complaint of sore throat or discomfort swallowing.

(SKIN) Presence of unidentified rash or impetigo, draining poison oak, cold sores, canker sores or fever blisters.

(VOMITING) Recurring upset stomach (more than once), or vomiting accompanied by a fever.

(DIARRHEA) Recurring loose stools when not food related or when associated with other symptoms of illness.

(LICE) Intense scratching of scalp. Mites or eggs (nits) in the hair.

(SCABIES) Raised red spots or lines on skin caused by a microscopic mite. Intense itching.

All our teachers are trained in pediatric CPR and First Aid.

XV. AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

Tara Redwood School offers an After-School Care Program Monday through Friday. The program runs from 3:00pm to 5:30pm. At 3:00pm for primary and 3:15 to preschool and elementary, your child will be checked into After-School Care. You will be charged for the first hour and then-after you will be charged by the half hour. The program will offer a variety of activities. The fee is \$6:00 per hour, payable on the first of each month. Your bill will accompany your monthly invoice. We request that parents please sign their child up in advance. The sign-up sheet is pinned to the After-School Care notice board. If you are running late or need to sign your child up through the month, please call: **462-9632**. If you need to contact the After-school program after 3 pm call **462-0300**.

If parents wish to stay after school and allow your child to play, you must be present and responsible for your own child at all times. Please become familiar with our guidelines for respectful and safe behavior on the playground.

Tara Redwood School

Parent/student pledge

Tara Redwood School asks that each parent and child read over its handbook, discuss the contents, and make a pledge to help build a place where a person can meet their highest potential in an academic community that is peaceful, stimulating and challenging. It is in this sense of community that we ask that each student understand the behaviors and values necessary to reach our goals, and make a pledge to uphold them.

1. We will be friendly, striving to be inclusive, open and helpful to every other student. We do not encourage clubs or cliques that exclude other children.
2. We will be respectful of each other and our teachers, parents, guests, and our environment. This means we do not tease, make fun of, or criticize those things that may be different from us. This also means that we treat all living things with kindness.
3. We will act and speak appropriately, meaning we will not hit, kick, or otherwise resolve our conflicts with each other through violence. We will not swear, or express our frustration through hurtful language. Instead we will seek out, through the help of our teachers, appropriate ways to resolve our conflicts and disagreements.
4. We will participate in our school activities in a positive manner. This means we will not interfere with the work of others or act in a disruptive way.
5. We understand that these are the rules of our school, and that by signing this pledge, we are promising to follow them.