

# The Children's House

Early Education Program (3 - 6 year olds) at Welsh Hills School



# Welcome to the Children's House

## Backpacks

Each child is asked to carry a backpack or school bag to and from school each day. Our goal is to develop responsibility and establish simple, early patterns to pave the way for homework later on.

- Each day as we prepare for dismissal, we will give students any notices or letters from the school for you. Students will place these and any papers they want to take home in their backpack folders.

Note: Remember that the majority of what your child accomplishes at school each day involves hands-on materials which remain here. Often the busiest students have no papers in their backpacks!

- **We ask children to unpack their backpacks themselves when at home.** Please help your child establish a time and place for this routine. Determine a place for them to put important papers or other items. We are striving for your child to undertake the responsibility of remembering and carrying out this simple task regularly, with your guidance and reminders, of course!
- When you have a message for anyone at school, please write it in your child's "Back and Forth Journal". When your child has an interesting item to share with the class, it can travel in the backpack. (See notes below about appropriate non-toy items to share at school.) **Whenever possible, please take the time to have your children pack their backpacks themselves so they will take ownership of managing these belongings.**
- Full-day students also use the backpack to transport their lunch boxes.

When purchasing a backpack or school bag for your child, try it out to see if it is spacious enough and easy for your child to open and close. Please DO NOT purchase a mini-backpack, one that unzips completely or has wheels.

## Sharing

We encourage students to share belongings as well as thoughts, ideas and experiences with each other and the class. One of our goals is to enable sharing to be as spontaneous as possible for the children. Therefore, no one is required to bring an item to school.

- Send items of interest to the class, as they are discovered at home by your child, such as nature items, books, tapes, original "inventions" or drawings your child has made, pictures or items to support the season, culture, holiday or science topic we are studying, etc.
- Our rich selection of curricular materials gives children many options for creative play. Therefore, we ask you not to send any toys (including stuffed animals, dolls, parts of toys, etc.) We will announce special days for these types of items from time to time, such as Toy Day, Teddy Bear Day, etc. **Otherwise, please leave all toys at home or in the car (not in backpacks). Please do not send weapons or money.**

- Let us know if an item is too fragile for handling. We will display it out of reach. Also, contact us in advance to share anything large or live!
- Sharing is done verbally each day. We value this form of sharing and encourage each student to participate. Students will sign-up to share each day before the morning meeting.

\*\* Please remember that we do not encourage students to bring items or ideas everyday or very frequently, but rather naturally, as an idea occurs to them.

## Belongings

Just as part of our curriculum is to promote students' care of their own belongings, we also model care of school materials. Many of the materials your child will use have intriguing, interesting little pieces which are begging to be stowed away in pockets or backpacks. Please help us out by keeping a careful watch throughout the year for small items which may be an important part of a set, for example: beads, pegs, shells, cubes, rocks, rings, etc. If your child is so tempted, we encourage you to have a talk explaining the inappropriateness of the action, and to expect your child to return the item. Likewise, we ask that children not bring any of their own belongings to school to give to friends. Although this often displays true sharing, we cannot be sure if parents know about or want the giving to take place. Moreover, other children always feel left out when personal belongings are given to a friend at school.

As items from your child's box of extra clothes at school are used they will be sent home muddy, wet or soiled clothes in a plastic bag. **Please replace them the following day.**

The school provides a cot sheet for each student in the nap group (full-day 3 and 4 year olds) to use throughout the year. They will take cot sheets and other bedding home each Friday for you to launder. Please return these items in a "nap bag" on Monday morning. Include on Monday one snuggly animal or doll for your child to have at nap that will remain at school all week.

## Arrival/Dismissal Guidelines

These guidelines are designed to help facilitate smooth transitions between home and school at the beginning and end of each child's day. Please help us coordinate those times and procedures by establishing a routine for your child.

**Please arrive on time each day.** Arriving on time and in an unhurried manner will allow your child to have the best start to each school day. If you don't have time for breakfast at home, please have your child bring it so that he/she can be on time. After hanging up his/her backpack, your child can finish eating and be part of our morning meeting.

**Before School Care** 7:30- 8:20 a.m.

Ask for information if you are interested in our early morning drop-off programs. All students who arrive before 8:20 a.m. are automatically included in this program, which has a daily rate above and beyond tuition. See the After School Programs brochure for rates, dates and procedures.

## **Regular Arrivals** 8:20-8:30 a.m.

A teacher will greet children as they enter the classroom. Many children will have separation difficulties at first (very normal!), and others will be unable to open the car door or schoolhouse door. Our goal is for your child to enter school independently.

- If your child can exit your car unassisted, use the curb lane. Please stay in your car and wait there to see that your child is safely inside the building before you leave.
- If your child needs help getting out of your car, use the parking area in front of the school. Walk your child from the parking area across the driveway and wait to see that he/she is safely inside the schoolhouse before leaving.
- To develop independence in your child and to streamline the arrival process, allow your young student to enter the schoolhouse on his/her own. Please say good-bye to your child on the porch so that your child can enter the schoolroom by him or herself.
- If you have a message for teachers, please send it in writing via your child's "Back & Forth Journal". Try not to engage teachers in conversation at arrival; we need to be available to your children.

The ideal time for your child to arrive is 8:20-8:25. Those who need to arrive between 8:00 and 8:20 a.m. should enter through the main lobby and sign their child in with Before Care. *Please Note: For security purposes, our front door will be locked except during arrival times.* We realize that the arrival routine needs to be established gradually, especially for new and young children. We appreciate your efforts to work toward the above procedure. Please see the following section,

**Suggestions for Smooth Transitions**, for additional information.

## **Regular Dismissals** 11:30 a.m. and 3:15 p.m.

Please pull up in front of our entrance and wait in your car (Refer to traffic guidelines). A teacher will dismiss students as their rides arrive, escorting them outside as needed.

## **Stay & Play** 3:15 - 6:00 p.m.

As a note to our morning families, Stay & Play is available to all Welsh Hills School children. Advanced registration is encouraged and more cost effective. The daily schedule includes some activities, lots of outdoor play and a snack. Parents must park, come in and sign their child out each day from the Stay & Play program. It is helpful to let us know in advance if you want your child to be ready at a certain time. Students can be picked up at any time during Stay & Play.

## Suggestions for a Smooth Transition

**My child cannot open our car door without assistance.** The parking spaces and the grassy area in front of the schoolhouse will give you the space and time needed to assist your child. From here, please walk your youngster to the sidewalk and say your good-byes there or at the doorway. **Before departing, wait to see that your child is safely inside the schoolhouse entry way.**

**My child cannot open the schoolhouse door without assistance.** A teacher or student helper will assist with this door. Please encourage your child to approach the classroom independently. This helps teach the independence we all want for our young students and permits class activities to continue uninterrupted.

**My child does not want to enter the schoolhouse alone.** Suggest that your child walk up the sidewalk with another child arriving at that time, or ask the teacher or student at the door to accompany your child inside.

**My child does not want to separate from me.** Walk your child to the schoolhouse door and attempt to say good-bye there. A teacher will be there to assist your child into the classroom.

**I am having trouble separating from my child!** After you have said your good-byes, feel free to take a peek at the classroom through the front porch window. Separation anxiety usually ends quickly after parents leave and children get involved. **Be assured that we will call you if your child continues to be upset.**

**I would like to stop in and visit in the classroom from time to time.** Know that you are very welcome to observe in our classes. After the first six weeks of school, we look forward to your delight in observing your child among peers. An observation sign-up sheet is available in the entryway. Please sign up for as many days as you would like.

**What's the best way for parents and children to separate positively? A happy hug and confident parting by the adult gives your child a positive attitude to start the school day.** Our goal is for every child to say good-bye as they leave their cars. We have found that it is easier for children to separate from their parents (or caregivers) in a more familiar environment. Outside, you can point out to your child how other children are saying good-bye to their parents. Inside, children often cling to parents and take longer to separate.

**My child wants me to carry his/her backpack.** Say, "No". To help children acquire a pleasant separation pattern, we suggest that you gradually give them more responsibility for their own belongings and make a point to notice their efforts to become independent (e.g., opening the door, carrying their own backpack, etc.)

**I have a message for a teacher.** In order for teachers to focus on students arrival, please do not use this time to engage teachers. Often messages are misunderstood or forgotten if given during the this busy time. We prefer a written note in the "Back & Forth Journal" so we can be sure to respond to your needs. If you cannot send a note, email us, or telephone the school office at ext. 10.

**I need to speak to a teacher.** If you would like to speak with one of us, let us know through the journal, email or by calling and leaving a voice mail at extension #11. We usually will be able to respond later the same day, and will be happy to talk on the phone or arrange a time to meet with you.

### **Conflict Resolution**

From time to time your child will be involved in conflict during the school day. These opportunities lend themselves to teaching peaceful resolutions. This takes time. If your child has a complaint that did not get taken care of during the school day, please send us a note via the "Back & Forth Journal" and encourage him/her to ask a teacher for help the next day. The note we receive from you will help us "remind" your child that they needed assistance. We believe it is important to remember that there are "two sides to every story". During these years "intent" is something that children learn to identify. Often things happen by accident as well as by intent.

### **Snack**

Each family is assigned a week or two for bringing in snack. Snack should be brought in Monday morning of the assigned week. You can send in the whole week's worth or you can send it in each day. Please send in the following amounts:

- 2 bunches of fresh fruit
- 2 bunches of fresh vegetables
- 2 packages/boxes of carbohydrates (whole grain baked only)
- 1 package of cheese or large container of yogurt/cottage cheese
- 1 gallon of milk

\*\* Organic foods are not required, but are appreciated.

### **Lunches**

Lunch is a social time for our youngsters. Please send only 2 items and a drink for lunch. Children have already had a mid-morning snack and will not need a large, multi-item lunch. We prefer that foods be whole and nutritious as possible. Please do not send pre-packaged food such as chips. Whole grain breads, fresh fruits and vegetables, cheeses and yogurt are excellent choices. Also 100% juices only. Packaging lunch with your child offers you a great opportunity to share beliefs about nutrition and their likes and dislikes. Un-eaten food is sent home so that you know your child did not eat it.

### **Birthdays**

Please send birthday treats for your child's class with your child in the morning. Special cups and napkins are optional. Please DO NOT send in a cake or cupcakes. Muffins, cookies, rice crispy bars or a healthier snack will be enjoyed by all!