

Parent Handbook

2011 – 2012

Running River School



Teaching through Nature

VISION STATEMENT: We seek to transform our present culture through building an alternative model of education based on deeply connecting children and parents to themselves, humanity and the planet.

MISSION STATEMENT:

We are a community of educators, children and parents dedicated to educating each individual to develop to their highest potential through a balanced continuum of physical, emotional, academic and spiritual curriculum from birth through high school. We guide children in developing:

- A foundation for life long health
- Self-knowledge
- Inner freedom
- An integrated understanding, respect and love for all of life

We create the conditions to nourish and expand:

- The spirit of inquiry and wonder
- Intrinsic motivation and self discipline
- Alert, holistic, objective thinking
- Conscious, sensitive, harmonious living

We are committed to providing meaningful, experiential, nature based learning; parent and family education and comprehensive teacher training programs.

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STATEMENT OF NON-PROFIT STATUS

Running River School is a non-profit corporation and is recognized as such by the IRS, according to Code 501(c)(3).

RUNNING RIVER CALENDAR 2011-2012

Aug. 27 (Saturday).....All School Orientation 1-4pm
Aug. 31-Sept. 2 (Tues.-Thurs.).....Older group camping trip
Sept. 5 (Monday).....School Closed for Labor Day
Sept. 6 (Tuesday).....First Day for whole school
Sept. 10 (Saturday).....All School Work Day & Picnic
Sept. 22 (Thursday).....Parent Forum
Oct. 14 (Friday).....School Closed for In-Service
Oct. 17-18 (Mon.-Tues.).....School Closed for Conferences
October 20 (Thursday).....Parent Forum
Nov. 17 (Thursday).....Parent Forum
Nov. 23-25 (W-F).....Thanksgiving Break
Dec. 15 (Thursday).....*Winter Festival*
Dec. 19-Jan. 1.....Winter Break
Jan. 16 (Monday).....School Closed for Martin Luther King Day
Jan. 19 (Thursday).....Parent Forum
Jan. 27 (Friday).....School closed for In-Service
Feb. 16 (Thursday).....Parent Forum
Feb. 20 (Monday).....School Closed for President's Day
Feb. 21 (Tuesday).....School closed for In-Service
March 8 (Thursday).....Parent Forum
March 16 (Friday).....School Closed for In-service & Fundraiser prep.
March 17 (Saturday).....Annual Fundraiser
March 26-April 1.....Spring Break
April 19 (Thursday).....Parent Forum
April 20 (Friday).....School Closed for Staff In-service
April 27 (Friday).....Running River Art Show
May 7 (Monday).....School Closed for Conferences
May 8 (Tuesday)School Closed for Conferences
May 10 (Thursday).....End of Year All School Parent Meeting May 19
(Saturday).....All School Play
May 24 (Thursday).....*All School Field Day 1:00*
May 25 (Friday).....*Last day of school*
May 28 (Monday).....School Closed for Memorial Day
May 29 (Tuesday).....School closed for Camping Trip Preparation
May 30 (Wednesday).....School Closed for In-Service
May 31-June 2 (Th-Sat).....*All School Camping Trip & End of School!*

Running River Agreements – Parents and Staff

- 1) **Commit to the mission**
I agree with the vision of Running River and will use it as a guide for my actions and responsibilities with the school.
- 2) **Communicate with integrity and compassion**
I agree to be direct and honest in speaking my truth, and to be open to the truth of others. I will only make agreements I am committed to keep.
- 3) **Listen with heart**
I will listen respectfully to others, open to the meaning behind their words.
- 4) **Respect differences**
I agree to be cooperative in my interactions with others, recognizing that different perspectives, choices, and methods enrich our community.
- 5) **Resolve conflicts directly**
I agree to take problems and complaints to the person(s) with whom the issue originated and work towards a cooperative solution. I agree to follow the Running River Grievance Policy.
- 6) **Honor our choices**
I agree to acknowledge that everyone, including myself, is making the best decision possible at that moment.
- 7) **Express appreciation for self and others**
I will acknowledge others and myself.
- 8) **Develop a positive relationship**
I will look for ways to participate with Running River to contribute to the development of an excellent environment for the children's process of learning and growing.
- 9) **Be a model**
I will use these agreements and be a model for my children to follow.
- 10) **Joy makes things happen!**
I agree to have fun and encourage joy in learning.

The Three Connections

Our aim as educators is to cultivate Connection and Responsibility to self, humanity and the planet. *Through these connections, a child grows from conception and complete dependence, to becoming fully independent, free, consciously responsible towards himself and the world in which he lives, and capable of fulfilling those responsibilities. We are living in a time of increasing health deterioration, the promulgation of war, and the destruction of the planet's natural resources. How can education be a remedy? How can we help children experience that who they are and how they live matters? Every child has the seed of potential to know and fulfill their gifts and capacities to participate fully and joyfully in attunement with life. What is needed is a continuum of education that tends each child's seed, at every stage, with all the necessary nutrients, to produce a strong, vital, knowledgeable, human being, centered in the heart and able to confidently meet life's challenges. Along this path these elements must be addressed:*

Connection to Self:

- Self-knowledge: awareness, acceptance, observation, understanding and expression of self
- Contemplative practices to contact inner calm
- Time for inner reflections on life's meaning and bigger questions of existence
- Physical fitness: experiencing the body's potentials and capacities, and understanding how to create the foundation for life long health
- Supporting the pursuit of self-motivated and self-directed passions and interests
- Self-discipline and energy management

Connection to Humanity:

- Multi-cultural, multi-age, multi-generational education that fosters respect, tolerance, and appreciation for human diversity
- Learn skills for all arenas of communication
- Develop both leadership and team skills
- Participate in all the Arts: Theater, Music, Dance, Art
- Contribute to classroom, school, local, national and global community through work, play and service projects
- Creating the village: connecting school and home through parent involvement and parent education

Connection to the Planet:

- An integrated, balanced, complete, challenging academic curriculum including authentic choices for all students
- Provide stewardship experiences: caretaker and guardian of the earth and animals
- Develop a personal relationship to nature through play, exploration, quiet time, hiking, camping and earth education
- Learn to access, infuse and make use of qualities and invisible sources of energy available in the natural world
- Gain an understanding of the causes of global environmental decay and participate in solutions
- Understand the interconnectedness and workings of all life's cycles: earth, water, air, plants and life/death
- Learn life skills for simple, sustainable living: agriculture, animal care, handcrafts, cooking, carpentry, fixing, cleaning, organizational skills

Guiding Principles:

Balancing Every Aspect of Education

Experiential and Meaningful Learning

Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I will understand. ~Chinese Proverb

Nothing is fully learned without experience. Running River is focused on a meaningful, experiential approach to education. We used project based learning to integrate all academics. In both collaborative thematic units and personal learning children design, with their advisor, a project that attempts to answer an essential question that the student has decided to research. Project goals include every academic area. In this way children become personally responsible for their learning. They work closely with their advisor and also have mentors that are experts in the area of their project. At the end of each project period they give exhibitions and presentations of their completed work, demonstrating what they have learned and how they have learned it. These final presentations must address the goals that were set out in the beginning. The process the children go through to learn everything they can in order to answer their essential question provides an in-depth learning experience that is tangible and can be applied to all learning endeavors.

'Good teaching is forever being on the cutting edge of a child's competence'. Jerome Bruner

Our goal is that children leave Running River with the skills to use their hands to work and live, their hearts to reflect and contemplate, and their minds to organize, analyze, solve and communicate. In order for this to be accomplished, they must develop the confidence to meet life's challenges, and have the competency to know what it takes to learn anything fully and deeply. This happens through being immersed in experiences that are real and meaningful, where they have to apply their knowledge, whatever it may be, at whatever age they are; to learn from and with others; to know how to acquire new information and test it out; to make mistakes; and to be persevering with a process that is in-depth, multi-faceted, uses both imagination and intellect, and in the end, is a reflection of how all discoveries are made and all problems are solved. This is the true joy of learning.

'No problem can be solved by the same consciousness that created it. We need to see the world anew.' Albert Einstein

Integrated Academics

In real life, everything is interconnected. The education at Running River is geared so that all learning is connected in the same way. One of our aims is to help children understand life as a whole process. In most schools, learning is fragmented into separate academic categories, with no unifying focus or interweaving thread. By integrating academics around a theme, children learn about a topic from every angle, teaching them the skills they need to learn about anything in depth, from the details to the bigger picture. This micro/macro perspective shift is the natural way for children to learn. Children always want to know why, and want to know more. Running River leaves no stone unturned when it comes to exploring children's longing to understand, and to connect to, what they are learning. Rather than being satisfied with the acceptance of simple answers, we want our students to enter adult life with the yearning to fully understand the world in which they live, and to have a lifelong love of learning.

Through out the year, we will be teaching life skills such as carpentry, gardening, cooking, sewing, cleaning, caring for machines and more. For each unit, we will begin with an essential question. For example: what is food? The class will then brainstorm the essential question, and each child will come up with branches of that question that they personally want to pursue. That will be the entry point for an in-depth, multi-faceted exploration into food. They will also brainstorm all possible resources from computers and books, to experts in the field to field trips. For example, the students, as part of this unit, will be learning to cook (the students will be cooking the school's lunches); studying the history and origins of different food (starting with what we harvest from our garden and local farms in the fall); managing a budget and learning to shop; nutrition; chemistry; using math to calculate meals; using language arts to research, write a cookbook, read literature that relates to food; write papers, stories, poetry, articles for the school paper; interviewing organic farmers; planting and harvesting food; building a coldframe/greenhouse, depicting food in art, learning songs about food, practicing mindful eating, and the list goes on.

The children drive the process through questioning and solving problems in multi-age learning pods that use collaborative learning to bring out every student's interests, ideas and talents. At the end of each unit, children will give presentations to demonstrate their learning.

Teaching Through Nature

“Law of Reciprocal Maintenance” states that every living thing is either giving or receiving, eating or being eaten. In this balance life is maintained and sustained. We can see how this works clearly in the plant world. Plants receive sunshine, nutrients and carbon dioxide. They give oxygen, food, medicine and shelter. This cyclic dynamic is true for each form of life. In the same way, when we take good care of all of life, then life takes good care of us. This fundamental law governs life on this planet, and is at the core of the philosophy of Running River.

Running River School's curriculum has a strong focus on our connection with the natural world. We weave environmental/earth education into all our curriculum, returning over and over to our connection to and responsibility for the natural world. We begin school in the fall with extensive outdoor, experiential learning. During this time we visit Boulder County Open Spaces and Mountain Parks as well as the high mountains. We always begin with EXPERIENCE, and immersion. The children explore, ask questions, make observations, and play. We also direct the children in nature games that awaken the senses and enhance their observation of the environment, from the visible phenomena to invisible qualities, such as the strength of trees or the calm of a pond. In the classroom, we discuss our various observations and use them as guideposts to create our deepening connection and understanding of nature and how all life around us is interconnected. We are then able to move between nature - with all its diversity, complexity, mystery and wonder - and the classroom.

The Village Phenomenon

Hiking takes place one to two times a week. On each hike, we find time for open play. This is where we have discovered the village phenomenon. Over and over we have observed that when we take young children out into nature they create a "village." They play/act hunting, gathering, building, cooking, nesting and protecting. Tensions fall away, and play takes on an energy of blending and cooperation. For hours, the children will play in this way with no input from the adults. Little shelters with cooking areas, utensils, food, bedrooms, clothing, animals, babies, and hunting weapons magically appear. Older children tend to explore, find challenges, create more complex games, or just hang-out talking. On some hikes we find all the children immersed in the village play. It is through play, exploring and manipulating the environment, that the children make nature a part of them, and come back to what has been appropriately named "having a sense of place," or "This is the earth, my home, and I am part of it, as it is part of me." Because of this deep connection, they also feel responsible for nature's safety and health.

Other types of learning take place, being in wild places. We have constantly observed the centering and calming quality that comes from being in Nature, and we believe this is a vital ingredient for the healthy development of every aspect of the child. We spend contemplative time in nature doing silent walks, art, journaling, quiet-time and what we call impressions work. This is the work of learning to receive the qualities housed in different forms, or impressions, of nature. Children also have a keen curiosity about all living things, and this inquisitiveness is a gateway towards creating a personal relationship with nature, and to fostering a sense of consciousness (or sensitivity) towards life. When children feel connected to life, there comes a feeling of belonging. This compassion is at the heart of self-esteem, inner-acceptance and the deeper understanding of life's meaning.

Individualized Learning Strategies,

Small Classroom Sizes and Personalized Assessments

Children learn and develop at their own pace. The myth that each child can be taught in the same rote fashion leaves many children confused, resulting in academic gaps which are either filled-in as adults, or never. There is no longer any question that there are many ways to learn (also called multiple intelligences). Multi-level learning means that each child has a way of learning that works best for him or her. Our teachers at Running River are able to address those different learning styles.

Running River classroom ratios are never greater than 15 to 1. In addition to the teachers, we have volunteers and parents who help in the classrooms. Teachers spend one-on-one time with each child, and pay close attention to their learning styles. As opposed to the labeling that is typical in the majority of schools, the teachers at Running River work to understand the needs of each learner by being receptive to them through observation, verbal interaction/conversations, and by looking closely at every child's work. With such small classes, material can be presented in a variety of ways, and children can learn in the style that maximizes their attention.

Students, starting in kindergarten, will be choosing projects that are both part of a collaborative unit and a personalized area of interest. Meeting with their main teacher, they will design the project, which includes setting goals in every academic area. Part of this process is to have students acknowledge their areas of strengths and address areas they are working on improving. This includes both academic, emotional, social, physical and intellectual. At the end of every project, the students will give public presentations to classmates and parents. They will then self assess, with support from the teacher, their project based on how they met those goals.

At Running River every child is also individually assessed in math and reading throughout the year. This is not accomplished by testing, but through time spent one-on-one with the teacher and using an individualized assessment program. In the beginning of the year, parents fill out a questionnaire about their child's strengths, weaknesses, passions, interests, learning style, and personal goals which the teachers also use to work with each child.

There are no grades at Running River. All projects, as well as work in other areas such as small math, reading and writing groups, go into portfolios. In addition, the teacher writes reports on all academic areas as well as the Arts, P.E. and the Emotional/Social arena. Conferences are scheduled twice a year, and can also be arranged whenever a parent or a teacher feels there is a need.

Self Knowledge and Search for Truth

Children have rich inner lives. They have deep feelings and intuition. At Running River, we honor a child's inner life. We begin each day as a whole school doing yoga so that the children can start off "centered" and "awakened" in their own words. We have daily quiet time where children have a chance to slow down and assimilate what they have learned, ponder and wonder about life, or just relax and do nothing. We also teach a sitting practice we call stillness, which we do every day as a transition into our afternoon academics. At the end of the day the students have a journal in which they reflect both their experiences and their daily learning.

For children to learn about the world, they need to know themselves. In order to be really sane in this dynamic, crowded world in which we live, we need a deep connection to ourselves and to be able to experience our aloneness. We want children to feel confident about being alone, as well as with people. We want children to know their own feelings, and what is right for them, and for them to be able to hear the truths that reside within them. Handling the push and pull between acting in the world and coming home to themselves is essential for the solidity of a child.

At Running River we focus on communicating effectively through Non-Violent Communication and the use of democratic councils for discussions and problem-solving. The children learn how to give and receive help from each other. Through this process they grow confident in effectively expressing their feelings, opinions and solutions to issues, as well as learning to see themselves and others more objectively and compassionately.

The Development of Qualities

What are the highest possible human qualities, and how are they developed? These are questions the staff at Running River asks as individuals and as teachers. We want children to be nourished by their own inner qualities, and not just by their actions. Qualities stay with us as we change in life. Although they are invisible, they are clearly manifested in all our actions.

Nature is a great teacher of qualities. Nature instills and demonstrates inspiring qualities. Every aspect of nature is the expression of a universal quality or force. Spending time in nature is one way we help children identify, develop and become attuned to qualities. For children to feel solid in who they are, they need qualities such as patience, receptivity, sensitivity, objectivity, stamina, joy, strength, gratitude and more. We know that these qualities can take a lifetime to take root and flourish, but by all of us working together to develop these qualities, and having a focus on qualities in our curriculum, we hope to give children a strong sense of what qualities are.

For example, when we are learning about overcoming obstacles we might spend time studying how rivers move around rocks. Another example is building strength over a

whole year so we can climb a mountain. We give children projects that allow them to hone in on the qualities that they may not have appreciated in themselves as yet. For example, patience is a quality required in raising rabbits, baking bread and making a book. Since we all desire that our children are able to meet life's challenges, we want to provide them with the tools to make sound decisions and handle the obstacles that arise. We aspire to teach them how to listen attentively, be open to the input of others, to take responsibility for their actions, to be responsible to themselves, to have patience to wait until they have an answer which is true for them, and to be confident and respectful in expressing their feelings and ideas. These are just a few examples of the essential role qualities play in the development of our children.

Community and Team Work

The ability to work as a team is a powerful and vital experience. We accomplish so much more together than we do alone. How many of the problems in the world could be solved if people learned how to live and work as a team with a common aim?

Running River is a community of teachers, parents and children. We use multi-aged classrooms and parent involvement to create our own model of a village. The children feel their classrooms to be a community, but also the school as a whole. Throughout the year, the entire school participates in projects (such as hatching chickens, theater events, all-school hikes and camping trips) and engages in service projects such as sponsoring a sister school in Uganda or cleaning up a local creek.

There are many opportunities to engage in teamwork. These come in many forms, such as: helping each other climb a rock, playing games, making a meal together, building a fort, choreographing original dances, solving problems collaboratively, doing scientific experiments, service projects, or fundraising.

Rituals are a glue that hold communities together. At Running River we use daily rituals to start the day, start hikes, begin our democratic councils, spend quiet time alone, express gratitude before meals, and end each day.

The focus on community and teamwork brings us back to one of our greatest needs as humans: to know that who we are and what we do matters, and that we can make a difference.

Teamwork is truly what makes a successful community.

Life Long Health

Nutrition: The health of the body is directly linked to the food we eat. We teach children all about food: what happens when we eat, the energy that food provides us with, how different foods affect us. We have set times during which we eat lunch and snack so that

children experience eating as part of the day's rhythm, rather than something we do haphazardly whenever a craving arises..... We teach children mindful eating: how to be present while preparing food and provide a calm, settled environment in which to eat. Rituals help us offer gratitude for the food we eat and for the work that goes into bringing it to our table. In addition, we have a garden where we grow our own food and give the children an experience of being stewards of the earth, involving them in the year-round process of food cultivation. We also work in other gardens. There is an old Sufi saying that goes, "Man is Heaven for food." We take this to mean that we have a responsibility towards the food we eat; to take the energy it provides us and to use it well.

The children are in charge of preparing lunch. They plan the menu, manage the budget, do the cooking, and learn to cook the meals. The kitchen comes alive as children, staff and parents prepare lunch. All food is organic, something Running River is committed to. A nutritionist works with the children to teach them all the elements of a balanced meal and what our bodies need to function at their best. The students learn the chemistry of cooking, the history of the food we eat, how to read a recipe and to convert it into different amounts, and how to organize and keep a kitchen clean!

All meals are organic, simple, whole and home made. Our meals are vegetable and grain based, and we include some poultry and fish. We work with children with allergies and sensitivities. All the children eat the food prepared at school, as it is part of our practice to eat together, as a guest would when visiting and being cooked for.

Physical Fitness:

We want every child to experience and develop their physical capacities. Children are full of energy and they know the power and joy of passionately engaging in physical activity. In addition to starting off two mornings a week with yoga, the children have open playtime for 45 minutes every day. We conduct P.E. to teach the children skills and to play team sports. We also go hiking and have movement/dance classes every week. In addition, we ski or snowshoe during the winter term, and go rock climbing in the spring. Matt bball

Education:

Every year the children learn about their bodies and how they work. As they grow older, the information becomes more complete and detailed, to include all the major functions of the body and hygiene. By the time they leave Running River, every student is well-educated about the components of lifelong health, and the choices they can make in order to take the best care of themselves.

General Operation of the School

Hours of Operation

We are open from 8:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. Tuesday through Friday. On Mondays we will be closing for staff meetings at 2:45. So that teachers can begin these meetings on time, they will not be able to engage parents in detailed conversations at the end of the day except when necessary.

Office Hours

This year all staff is teaching. The phone will be checked regularly throughout the day. When you call, it is unlikely you will reach a live person the majority of the time. Please leave messages and we will return your call as soon as possible. Throughout the year we will be training the older children to check for messages to return certain calls. We use cell phones for off site emergencies.

Arrival and Pick up

- Children are expected to be ready to begin school at 8:45, which means they are in the building and have said their goodbyes. We will be starting every day with 15 minutes of a contemplative activity in either the Community Room or Fellowship Hall. We ask that children come in the school entrance (far south end of building), hang up their coats and backpacks, remove their shoes and that parents walk the children to the room where the activity is occurring. We also request that parents not converse within earshot of the activity so that we can create a quiet atmosphere to start our day.
- Teachers will be taking attendance so it is not necessary to sign your child in.
- Under no circumstances will a child be released to anyone unauthorized by the parent or guardian. We ask that you notify the School Director or teacher if someone other than the child's parent or guardian is to pick them up, or leave us a phone message. If we have not been informed ahead of time, we will not release the child unless we have contacted you. We will ask for identification if the person is unknown to us. In the event of an emergency, you may send a written, signed note authorizing the release of your child to the specified person. In this way, we know where the children are at all times.

- School ends at 3:15. We will keep the children in the rooms until 3:20, (on Monday this will be 2:50) at which time your child will be released to go outside, unless you have called and left a message that directs the teacher to do otherwise. There will be no staff supervision outdoors after school. Parents are responsible for their children from 3:20 on, so that teachers are free to clean or attend to other after school business such as meetings or conferences. (We will not send children outside in inclement weather).
- WHEN THE CHILDREN LEAVE THE BUILDING AFTER SCHOOL, WE REQUEST THAT THEY DO NOT RE-ENTER THE BUILDING EXCEPT TO USE THE RESTROOM.

Late Arrivals and Absences

We ask that each child be on time to school, which is 8:45 a.m. It is important for us to start the day cohered and focused. Because of this, after 8:45 a.m. we are not able to carry on conversations with parents or at other times during the day when we are engaged with the children. Please see the section on Parent Communication and under our Office Hours for the best times to reach the teachers or to set up special times to talk. If you want to share something important with a teacher about your child first thing in the morning, this can be done before 8:40, or please feel free to leave a message on the teacher's desk.

Please call us by 8:30 if you know your child will be absent from school. This is important in terms of our lunch planning and cooking. If you know your child is going to be late and can let us know the day before, that will help us to plan, as when we leave on field trips it saves us the time of having to call you if your child has not arrived. Please let us know if you are going to be gone for extended periods of time other than holidays. Your child may have some work to make up.

Late Pick-up

Children need to be picked up by 3:15 p.m., unless they are staying for an after school program. If you know in advance that you are going to be late, please call as we may be able to help.

Child Abuse and Neglect

We are required by law to report all suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the Department of Social Services. We are not permitted to call parents before calling Social Services.

Confidentiality of Records

All information concerning you and your child is kept in a separate file and remains confidential between family members and appropriate staff.

Payments, Schedules and Closures

Tuition and Fees

There is a one time fee of \$50 to register your family at Running River School. This is due when registration paperwork is turned into the office. There is a \$375 yearly supply/field trip fee due on or before the first day of school. Full tuition is \$9810 in nine monthly payments of \$1090. The September payment must be paid at the parent orientation along with the supply fee. Each family will then provide the school with 8 postdated checks of \$1090 for the first of each month from October through May on or before the first day of school. In addition, please write a check for \$70 for each month starting in September. Each family is expected to fulfill their Parent Program responsibilities as outlined in the school contract and at the back of this handbook. If these are met, the Director will tear up the \$70 check for that month at the end of the month. We know that children become ill (and parents too) and that families go on trips. We ask that you are consistent with attending parent forums, spending time in the classroom and helping with the fundraiser.

The monthly tuition paid takes into account holidays. Because of this, your tuition payment is the same each month, regardless of holidays, illness or vacation time. You are financially responsible for your contract, whether your child attends or not, unless another arrangement is made in writing with the School Director. If you decide to leave Running River, we request a two-week prior notice. All tuition is still owed to the school. In the case of a child being asked to leave Running River, there is no refund of the collected tuition. Please read your contract carefully as it outlines your financial obligations.

Weather Closures

We follow the snow day criteria of the Boulder Valley Public School District. We will close in the event that the Public Schools are closed due to hazardous weather conditions. Listen to the local radio station for information or watch the school closure announcements on the News. We are not able to reimburse tuition for any closures due to weather.

Holiday Closures

Please see the enclosed calendar for a list of all holiday closures.

Field Trips

Transportation and Field Trip Arrangements

When you sign your contract, there is a field trip form for you to sign, which gives permission for your child to leave Running River grounds. The field trip form that parents sign with the contract includes all field trips taken. In addition to hiking, swimming, and trips to the park, there are special trips to places such as zoos, museums, libraries, etc. These trips are arranged directly with the parents in advance so that parents can attend. Some of these trips are paid for, and some we ask for parents to pay. As much as possible, we pay for field trips and events.

Safety When Riding in a Vehicle

Safety is of utmost importance when riding in a vehicle to and from field trips. We expect that all vehicles will meet basic safety requirements and that children will be properly secured in an appropriate booster or car seat as outlined in state laws. Children must keep their hands inside the vehicle at all times. Children do not ride in the front passenger seat unless they have been approved to do so by a parent.

We follow Colorado's booster-seat law. This law requires that all children under 8 ride in booster seats. Each child over 4 feet, 9 inches must be restrained in an individual seat belt; never two or more in one seat belt. Lap belts should be secured low and tight across the upper thighs and under the belly. Children must be instructed and encouraged to keep the belt properly fastened and adjusted. (i.e. children are not to remove their shoulder harness.) The driver is responsible to make a good faith effort to assure that each child is properly belted when the trip begins and throughout the trip.

Risk Management

At Running River, we spend a lot of time in the field hiking. In order to effectively prevent injury, we use Safety Briefings to orient students to new environments. It is important to create awareness around hazards. It is equally important to illicit ideas and rules from students in order to create a life long ability to assess and avoid risk.

We use safety briefings any time we enter a new environment, such as walking on a trail vs. walking on a bike path, or playing in a forest vs. playing near a river. In the risk management model we use, we define Environmental hazards and Human hazards. Then, we create rules to separate the two in order to avoid incidents. Below is an example of an environmental briefing. This particular briefing might take place before playing in the foothills.

We gather all the children in a circle, make sure they are all listening by expecting complete quiet and asking for all eyes and ears on us. We WAIT until this happens, asking children who aren't doing this to please do so, or moving them next to a teacher to make it easier.

Then we ask the children to look around at the environment. What do they see that could cause injury? They answer. Then, what rules do we need to follow to stay safe? Which of these rules are to protect us from the environment and which from human error? They answer until we feel like we have all the rules laid out clearly. Examples of these rules:

- Always stay in sight of a teacher/adult
- Not going off the trail during the hike
- No running with sticks
- No throwing anything from a high place
- In winter no going in the water
- If water is fast, there might be no going near the water
- Moreover, of course, our favorite rule: NO KISSING COYOTES!

Camping Trips

In the fall, the older class goes on a 2-5 day camping trip, depending on the age of the children, the location and the year. A minimum of two staff

go on the trip along with parent volunteers. The cost is extra and covers food, camping fees, transportation and equipment. Children are not required to attend, but we recommend it. It is a wonderful way for the children to bond at the beginning of the year. We always have a lot of fun, experience new places and spend time in nature.

In the spring, the entire school goes camping together. All families are invited along. Traditionally we have gone to Rocky Mountain National Park for 2 nights. The cost is also extra and is dependent on the number of people attending and the costs for the trip.

Special After School Activities

A few events during the year happen after school hours, including some weekends. These events are such things as the all school picnic in the fall, camping trips, plays, fundraisers, improving the playground, other special projects, and parents helping students on individual or small group projects. Two trips are scheduled for this year so far, one in August/September for the upper grade students, and the other in June for the entire school and families. An occasion may arise when a special field trip may be perfect to supplement the curriculum. These trips are discussed with the parents before being offered. Occasionally there might be an extra fee to make these possible.

Homework

We believe there is no more important homework than reading. Research shows that the most successful students are those who devote leisure time to reading. In addition, one of the few predictors of high math achievement, as noted in international studies, is the amount of time children (nine and thirteen year olds) devoted to pleasure reading. In all grades we ask that your child read or be read to every night.

Other than reading every night, students in the 2nd grade on up have homework to expand upon work being done in class. This work should be completed with little parental assistance, although you may need to support your children in being responsible about completing and handing in their homework depending on their age. As stated in our curriculum, the children will all be doing learning projects that require all kinds of

different research. Some of this research will involve your help. Children will also have math practice to do at home. If your child works in a focused manner for a half an hour to an hour, depending on age, on the work assigned and is unable to complete it, s/he should stop, then let the teacher know how long s/he spent working on it and where s/he is having problems. Parents can help by writing a note at the top of the homework page.

Childrens' Illnesses and Policies

There is a fine line when providing group care and meeting the needs of each of our parents, especially working parents. We recognize your schedules are demanding, but please understand we have a responsibility to the entire school, to the health of all the children and their families. The state health department requires the policies below to be endorsed by our staff. We apologize for any immediate inconvenience.

For the well being of the other children, we cannot provide for sick children. The Acting Director has the right to decide whether a child may attend school or not, if the child does not appear well. When a child is sick, it is the parent's responsibility to find alternate care.

We can be contacted to discuss your child's symptoms, and help you evaluate whether or not they should be kept at home. Please keep your child at home if he or she:

- has a fever over 99 degrees (orally) or has had a fever in the last 24 hours
- has a constant cough
- has a thick green nasal discharge
- has chest congestion causing difficulty in breathing
- has any drainage from eyes, swelling or redness
- has an intestinal disturbance accompanied by diarrhea or vomiting
- has a combination of these symptoms
- does not seem well even though there are no obvious symptoms yet
- was exposed to, or has symptoms of a communicable disease

Your child may return if he or she:

- has been fever free and vomit free for 24 hours
- has a minor nasal drip
- has been receiving antibiotics for a specific disease FOR AT LEAST 24 HOURS
- has gone through the agreed upon incubation period for exposure to a communicable disease and is symptom free

PLEASE NOTIFY US IMMEDIATELY IF YOUR CHILD WAS EXPOSED TO, OR DOES HAVE A COMMUNICABLE DISEASE, (i.e., chicken pox, pink eye, measles, mumps, strep throat, hand and foot disease, etc.). In addition to these common illnesses, lice have been known to enter schools and make their little homes in children's hair. It is extremely important that we know immediately so that we can notify all families of proper action to prevent the spreading of lice. If there is an outbreak of lice, children will be checked when they arrive at school, and sent home if any lice are found. Ringworm is another pest that can sometimes come into a school and spread.

If your child should become ill while at school, we would appreciate your prompt cooperation in picking him or her up. It is our policy that your child is picked up within one hour after our call. If for any reason you are not able to come in for your child within the hour after we notify you, please have your emergency back-up person (relative, friend or neighbor) come in and pick up your child. Please notify us of these arrangements.

Administration of Medication and Medical Care

Running River abides by the following regulations of the Colorado Department of Social and Health Services, which read as follows:

"The giving or application of prescriptive, or non-prescriptive medication for eyes and ears, all oral medication, medication for breaks in skin or severe burns, or an individual special medical procedure shall be provided only on written order or a prescription from a physician to the child's parent or guardian(s), or to the School, with the knowledge and written consent of the parent(s) or guardian(s)."

"Medication prescribed for an individual child shall be kept in the original container bearing the original pharmacy label which shows the prescription number, name of medication, date filled, physician's name, child's name, and direction for dosage."

In the event that your child requires emergency medical care, we will follow the guidelines of "Permission to Receive Emergency Medical Care" form that is filled out at the time of admission. This is a release to allow us to take whatever steps are necessary to obtain emergency medical care for your child. Please refer to this form to familiarize yourself with the actions we take.

Food Program

At Running River we have a sincere concern for the health and well-being of your child. We believe diet is one of the main foundations for life long health. We approach diet from the holistic viewpoint that a healthy, positive relationship to food and eating nourishes the child not just physically, but emotionally and mentally as well. Our all-natural, primarily organic, whole food diet is prepared daily. This year, the food will be cooked by the students, staff and some parents. Throughout the school year students will be cooking certain meals, and also learning how to care for our compost. We are also going to focus on cutting down on waste, so after composting and recycling, we will be weighing all our waste from lunch to see how to reduce as much as possible.

This year we will provide lunch Monday through Thursday. Please send a cold lunch that will be good for hiking days, on Fridays. They will be carrying their lunch with them on the hike, so a simple sack lunch is the best.

We have our own simple rituals for eating times. The children sit down to eat all together for meals. They transition into meal times by singing or having a minute of silence. We then have 10 minutes of quiet music listening. The children take turns serving each other as well as washing tables after the meal. We have discussions about table manners, eating slowly, tracing our food back to its origins and other elements of conscious eating. We attempt to create a calm atmosphere while the children eat, and spend time at the table much as a family would; enjoying each other's company, talking, and taking time to be together for the communal experience of eating. All children wash their own dishes. This approach to meal time helps the children learn to be more present with the entire experience of eating, from tasting the food to noticing the colors and textures, to sensing how their bodies feel during and after eating.

We ask that your child not bring their own lunches or snacks to school (except on Fridays) unless it has been arranged with the teachers.

We know that children love to have a lunch box, and to bring things from home. Therefore, we will be supplying the main course for lunch and your child can bring their own drink (no sugared drinks, soda pop or caffeine). We plan for and expect children to supplement lunch with any of the following:

- Fruit or vegetable
- Nuts, dried fruit, nori sheets
- Yogurt
- Cheese
- Meat slices

PLEASE DO NOT SEND ENERGY/SNACK BARS, chips, cookies or desert as children tend to eat these and not the main meal. Menus are emailed at the beginning of each month, and are posted on the main bulletin board in the hallway so you can plan accordingly.

Special Needs

We try to accommodate children's individual dietary needs. If, given the constraints of cooking for a group of children, we are unable to meet a child's particular needs, we will ask parent's to supply their child's food. Please discuss this with the Director before school starts.

Snacks

This year, due to the rise of food costs, we are asking parents to help with snacks. We serve snack in the morning, around 10:00. This is meant as a small snack to hold them over until lunch. Parents will be responsible for snack 2 times in the year. This will cover 2 weeks worth of snack. They can either pay \$40 for both those times, or supply the snack. Here is a list of what we usually have for snack (the criteria is simple, organic, no preparation, not messy, and no need for utensils!):

- Nuts and dried fruit (lots of variety to choose from in this category!)
- Apples
- Carrots

Birthday Treats

We realize that birthdays are special for the children and many families like to celebrate at the school by bringing in a special treat. At Running River, we use no refined sugars in our cooking to keep in line with our all-natural diet. If you wish to bring a treat for your child's birthday, we ask that it be a "natural treat." For example:

- Fruit
- Muffins or cookies made with honey (no chocolate please)
- Pie or cake with cream cheese frosting and/or fruit
- Organic granola bars
- Yogurt pops
- Zucchini, carrot or banana bread

Please check with your child's teacher to find out if there are any allergies in the classroom. If possible, we ask that all children be provided special snacks, so that no one is left out.

Clothing Your Child Needs to Have at School **(LABELED....PLEASE)**

At Running River, we spend a great deal of time outdoors. It is imperative that your child has the right clothing to keep warm, (or cool), dry, and comfortable. Remember that in Colorado, especially in early spring and fall, the weather can go through amazing changes during the day. Layering is always a good bet. This is the clothing we ask you to purchase for your child. This list may sound extensive, but it allows the children to be outside in all kinds of weather, which means many more experiences of nature and also of themselves IN nature. These valuable experiences set them up for a life long relationship to the outdoors, as well as how to dress and care for themselves in any kind of weather. Every child must have:

- **Appropriate footwear.** For most weather, hiking shoes are fine (NO SANDALS OR CROCS OR SHOES WITH FLAT BOTTOMS AND NO GRIP). Please, please make sure this happens. It affects the entire group if one child cannot make it on the hike we have planned because of poor footwear. There are prickles everywhere, and it is really hard to hike and run in poor footwear, not to mention dangerous. In the winter when there is snow, their feet need to be WARM. So they need some kind of snow boot.

- **Rain and Snow Gear:** This year we are asking that all the children have **rain pants**. This will keep them much drier in wet weather, and so they will have much more fun! These can also be used in the winter. They will only wear snow suits on hikes when it is really cold and snowy, which isn't that often. But, it is often wet in the winter and in order for them to hike more comfortably, rain pants work best. They also must have a **sturdy poncho or raincoat**. In this way, their entire body will be covered and kept dry!
- **Socks:** In the winter they must have wool socks! This can go from fall all the way to spring. Cotton socks will not keep their feet warm or dry.
- **Winter: Warm hats, thick gloves or mittens** (mittens are best and waterproof is better ... those little thin gloves are useless!!!) Please send warm clothes for late fall, winter and early spring hiking: **fleece, windbreakers or coats...layers.**
- **A comfortable fitting backpack** to hold clothing, a water bottle, a science kit, and part of lunch
- **A large (at least 24 oz.) water bottle** that will fit in their back pack and WILL NOT LEAK. Please no store bought water as these leaks. A good, solid water bottle!!
- **Sneakers appropriate for running on P.E. days.**

Please do not send your child to school in clothing you do not want to get dirty or even possibly torn from climbing and exploring!

Have an extra set of dry clothing (everything!) in case we get wet, which could happen at any time of the year. This clothing must be **LABELED AND IN A BAG**. Please make sure to replace this clothing if your child comes home wearing it, so there is always extra clothing available.

Children's Personal Belongings

Every child has a storage area for their belongings, their coats and shoes and extra clothing. We ask that **NO PERSONAL TOYS BE BROUGHT TO SCHOOL**, or items that are easily lost or broken, especially the commercialized, pop culture toys, action figures, and superheroes. In terms of "special sharing," this will be worked out in individual classrooms.

Lost and Found

Please check the lost and found box weekly. It lives in the bathroom off of the older student's classroom. Anything left over two weeks will be considered abandoned and gotten rid of. If you discover any unfamiliar items at home such as small beads, plastic pieces, clothing or toys, please return them to the school. These tiny items may be an essential element belonging to a particular item at school and could be very difficult to replace.

Running River Code of Conduct

This code is designed to create the opportunity for children to learn the process of mindful respect for themselves, each other and the environment.

The Six Keys for the Running River Code of Conduct

Creating

- Safety and respect for self, others, belongings and the environment
- Present/mindful listening
- Clear, direct, honest, respectful communication
- Immediate response and staff involvement in dealing with teasing, exclusion, bullying and physical harm
- Consistency from all adults working with the children
- An environment for learning

The Code of Conduct - Three Main Areas

1. Creating an atmosphere of learning through daily practices such as:

- Beginning our day with ritual that establishes calm, respect, safety and focus
- Transitions between activities that include completing and starting any activity
- Clearly defined expectations for all areas of learning and activity that form the boundaries and guidelines of the school

2. Empowering children with tools to express feelings, needs, and opinions; create sensitivity to the feelings of others; mediate personal problems; learn to solve group issues. This includes:

- Teaching children Non-Violent Communication (NVC)

- Using classroom and all school councils for discussion and problem solving
- Mediation for issues between children with both staff and other children.
- Working with parents when necessary.

3. A Discipline Committee that includes members of the Board of Directors and staff. This is the final step when children are having continued difficulties in following the Code of Conduct.

When there is a student who is continually having social/emotional difficulties, and intervention from staff combined with parent involvement has not been successful in creating positive change, the parents will meet with a committee formed of a board member and a staff member to discuss the issues and find solutions if possible.

Goals

- Children take responsibility for their behaviors and actions
- Children have the opportunity to make decisions about their behaviors and actions
- Mindfully treating one another with respect and decency

Starting the Day

In order for your child to be on time to the contemplative practice at 8:45, we recommend that you arrive at school at 8:40. If you arrive at 8:30, please follow the same procedure as explained under Arrival and Pick Up. We again want to emphasize how important it is to be on time. For this reason, when children are late two times in a week, the teacher will speak to the parent and request that the child to be on time to school. If the parent does not respond to this request (after being made by the teacher two times) the Director will call and talk to the parent or set up a conference.

Most days, after the morning practice, every classroom starts with a circle to begin the day. Each teacher decides the content of that circle. The elements of a good start to the day may include (depending on age):

- A short story or poem for discussion
- Going over the schedule for the day
- Expectations of the day
- A check in with the children in some form (sharing a feeling, an intention for the day, an internal weather report are a few examples)

- A review of the school rules at the beginning of the year and periodically throughout the year.

Transitions

At Running River, transitions are part of a healthy, balanced approach to life. They allow us to complete an activity, pause, or start an activity fully present and prepared. This enhances the entire learning process. We will use specific transitions:

- To start our day
- To complete activities
- To begin activities
- Entering and leaving the building
- Entering and leaving the classroom

Classroom Expectations

Our classrooms are environments for learning. This can look different for different ages, with different activities combined with diverse learning styles. In general, we expect children to:

- Listen when a teacher is giving instructions
- Listen when other children are sharing as part of a class discussion, presentation or project
- Treat others with respect
- Actively participate

In the classroom, if a child is being disruptive to the learning environment:

1. The first few times this happens a teacher can give a gentle, if possible private, verbal or non-verbal reminder of the rules of the class to redirect the child's attention to the activity or discussion.
2. If the behavior continues, the child will be removed from the situation and will be asked to answer these questions: What are you doing (what is the behavior)? What are you feeling and needing? What can you do different? After being given some quiet time, the child will answer these questions to the teacher. This gives the child a chance to self reflect and take responsibility, and try again.
3. If the behaviors continue, the teacher will involve the parents in working together to both understand what might be causing the issues, and in strategizing as a team.

4. If the behavior continues the Director decides whether the child attends the Discipline Committee with the parents.

The Discipline Committee

If necessary, a Discipline Committee comprised of Nancy Monson or Megan Flaherty, a Board member and the teacher of the class the child is in, will meet to discuss a particular situation needing attention. This is the last stage and the adults come up with the strategy and present it to the child. It is the last “strike” before being dismissed from school. Parents of the child also attend this meeting.

In the case of difficulties between two or more children:

A teacher will mediate with the children, effort to get the whole story, and giving the children the opportunity to take responsibility and make decisions about how to solve the problem.

Mediation

If two children are having problems getting along, the following will happen:

- Both parties agree to try to solve the problem and speak respectfully.
- Each person states the problem (trying to use “I” statements) as s/he sees it and how s/he feels without interruption. We use the Non-Violent Communication process.
- The listener restates what s/he heard the speaker say.
- Each person states what s/he need from the other in order to solve the problem.
- The children offer solutions to solve the problem.
- Everyone agrees to the solution upholding each other’s needs.
- We try not to belabor the process. Too much talking does not always work. We try to keep it simple and to the point.

If this turns into a repetitive problem:

- The next step would be for the children to meet with their parents and teacher to discuss strategies.
- If the children are still having problems, and it is disrupting the environment of the school, it will go to the Discipline Committee with the parents of both children attending the conference. Children may be asked to attend depending on the situation and/or age.

The staff has researched and been consulted on bullying. We want to make sure we define what bullying is. Bullying can be physical, verbal and relational. Contempt is a key component in all of these.

Bullying has these four markers:

- Imbalance of power
- Intent to harm
- Threat of further aggression
- And at the further reaches: terror (systematic violence used to intimidate and maintain dominance)

Our number one priority is for all children to be safe in every way, at Running River. By keeping ourselves as present, observant and aware as possible, we will work to help all the children have healthy relationships with their peers. If bullying is observed or reported, we will communicate with the children, the staff and the parents to take actions to protect and work immediately with the situation. We may request a child receive professional therapy in order to stay at Running River.

Parent Communication in the Process of Student Behavioral Issues

Parents of a child who is having repeated problems getting along with other children or disrupting the classroom will be contacted if a situation is repetitive or severe.

If a child commits a severe threat to a child or staff member, the parent community will be informed within all legal requirements of protecting the rights of the child(ren) involved.

Suspension

Consequences for being physically violent with an intent to harm another child are that the aggressor is sent home. The child must meet with the Director and teacher, and parents, where a strategy is laid out, before returning permanently to school.

Threats to Safety and Weapons at School

If a child threatens the safety of a child or children or staff at school, they will be sent home from school immediately. This can be a clear verbal threat or a weapon. Any child who brings a weapon to school will be sent

home immediately. Weapons include all forms of firearms (whether operable or not), swords, knives, explosive devices of any kind, or any other instrument whose primary purpose is to cause physical injury (whether defensive or offensive in nature). Exceptions to this policy can be made by the Head of School for purposes of curriculum-related demonstration or exhibition (for instance a civil war sword during a study on the civil war), so long as permission is sought before the day that the weapon is brought to school, and it is put in the teacher's custody while in the school building

Open Time Rules

- Kids outside only with an adult
- Children must ask an adult when they need to go inside.
- Children must stay within the school's agreed upon boundaries.
- Rules for competitive games are discussed and agreed on between the children before they begin to play.
- All children are expected to bring in equipment they have been playing with, as well as to bring in equipment they find on the playground. We are a community that is learning how to take responsibility and help each other!
- All playground equipment is to be used in the way it was designed to be used
- Throwing sand, rocks, sticks or stones is prohibited
- At the end of open time the kids line up at the door and wait for the teacher to take them in, before entering the building. If it is wet or muddy, shoes are taken off and left outside.

After School Play

Often children play outside after school while parents spend time together talking. The school rules are the same after school as during school. Parents are responsible for their children as soon as school ends. If there is an aggressive interaction between children after school, it is the responsibility of any parent observing to step in and separate the children involved. Almost always there are teachers inside who can then be asked to help. The staff requests that the parents involved notify the teachers of the incident immediately.

WHEN THE CHILDREN LEAVE THE BUILDING AFTER SCHOOL,
WE REQUEST THAT THEY DO NOT RE-ENTER THE BUILDING
EXCEPT TO USE THE RESTROOM.

At our first parent forum, we will be walking parents through our mediation process, as well as giving parents direction in dealing with issues that can occur on the playground after school. As a community, we will come up with an after school play plan.

Non-Violent Communication

Non-Violent Communication was created by Dr. Marshall Rosenberg, PhD. The web site is cnvc.org. It is a system for being able to get to the unmet needs that often cause problems in relating. It includes learning to state the behavior or issue objectively, state feelings and needs, and make a request. All needs can be met if we work together, and we are all responsible for our own feelings and responses to life. It also teaches empathic listening. All the teachers have either taken workshops in NVC, read books about it, or are in the process of learning it.

Councils

We use a council system that has evolved out of a system from the Albany Free School in New York. It follows Robert's Rules. A clearly-stated problem is brought to the council by a teacher or a student. This problem can be a class issue, a whole school issue, a personal issue or an issue between children. Using a "talking stick", each child has the opportunity to express feelings or opinions they have concerning the issue at hand. The next round consists of brainstorming solutions, all of which are written on the board. Once the solutions are clearly stated, and all are possible within the rules of the school, then a democratic vote is taken of students and staff in the council. The winning solution is posted and engaged. We come back to it a week later (or sooner if necessary) for evaluation. Council is also used to simply discuss important issues of all kinds.

When Students Refuse to Participate in an Educational Activity

When children refuse to participate in an educational activity the teacher will work with the child to understand why, and to create a process to

work with the particular situation. Parents will also be notified and included in the process.

When Students Don't Complete Work in the Classroom

How uncompleted work is handled will vary according to age and the expectation around the work. For the older children, if possible, they will try and complete their work in the classroom. When possible, we will give them time to complete their work before moving on to the next activity. When there is not enough time, it go home in a homework folder for completion. This is only really an issue for a child who needs more help with staying on task.

Walking Through the Hallways

We expect parents and children to walk quietly through the hallways in order to respect the other children in the classrooms who are working, and the church staff working in their offices.

Keeping the Hallways Neat

All children are expected to help keep the hallways and school neat. Each class has a hook monitor who checks the hooks right after circle and right after open time and puts all items left on the ground in the crates and straightens shoes against the wall.

Water:

We request that all children have LARGE 32oz. water bottles that they leave at school during the week, and take home on weekends to be washed. They need to be clearly labeled with the child's name. There is filtered water in the classrooms. We will have extra water bottles at school that can be borrowed if your child does not have a water bottle. If a water bottle comes home labeled Running River, please wash it and return it to school.

Caring for the Environment of Running River and the New Church of Boulder Valley

1. We greatly appreciate the use of the New Church of Boulder Valley. Our agreement with them includes caring for the environment, both inside and out. For this reason, these rules apply:
2. Soccer and other sports are played in the big field to the south of the building. They are not to be played on the front grassy areas as it ruins

the grass. Please do not let your children play sports on this area after school.

3. Children are not allowed to play in the fountain at the front of the building.
4. All children remove their shoes when entering the building. In the morning, their shoes can be placed under their hooks in the hallway. After open time, the shoes are left outside, where they are gotten at the end of the day. If you have mud on your shoes when you are coming into the building, please remove your shoes at the door.
- 5. No dogs are allowed on the grounds at any time.**
6. No running or loud talking in the hallways, as the staff of the church has offices there and they are often working.
7. No profanity in the building or taking the name of the Lord in vain.

Television, Videos and Other Media

Television is used when we feel that a video would greatly enhance an area of study, or to watch a movie that we feel the children could benefit from as a group. We feel that children need social contact and play that stimulates all their senses, as well as their emotional, physical, and intellectual aspects. In addition, the teachers have collected a multitude of information from magazines, reports and books about the effect of television and too much computer time on children's growing brains, on their social skills and their overall development. We recommend limited t.v. and video games or computer time at home. Watching good movies as a family can at times be an educational or fun way to spend family time. There are so many more great ways to spend time than watching T.V., and when it is limited, children always find what those ways are! If you are interested in any of the available materials on this topic, please ask.

Computers

There will be computers in the classrooms. For the younger grades, K-3, these computers are for teacher's use. However, it may be appropriate at times to look up something on the computer, show the children, and print out reports or photos. For example, if the children are studying animals and there is a story on a web site about a special event with an animal, the teacher could show this to the children, read about it, and put it on their

bulletin board. For the older grades, the computers will be used for creative writing stories' final drafts, for research reports and in other ways that contribute significantly to the curriculum.

Conferences

We schedule parent-teacher conferences three times a year to better meet the children's needs. If at any time you would like to request a conference, we are available most weeks. You can talk to your child's teacher and arrange a time. Occasionally, we may recommend an additional conference with you. These conferences help us all keep abreast of your child's development and particular needs to provide consistent and thoughtful care.

Board of Directors

Running River is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of the Directors of Running River and Homestar Child Development Center (our early childhood center in S. Boulder), parents from both schools and community members. There is an Operating Board that is part of the Governing Board that oversees all the daily operations and policies of Running River. The Operating Board is made up of parents and staff. The Operating Board of Directors makes all major decisions and set the governing policies for the school. Input from parents is welcome and weighs heavily on the decision-making process. The Operating Board meets every month and is available to answer questions via email or before every Parent Forum. Please refer to the school by-laws for details. There is an annual all school meeting when the Board reports the financial status of the school.

Parent Involvement

Children learn a great deal more by modeling and imitating than by being told and listening. For this very reason, we want to create a strong partnership between families and staff to create consistent messages and images between school and home. Everything that we teach the children we also teach the parents. We find that the more parents are involved in their own learning process, the more easily we can all work with the children. This includes all areas of development. You cannot expect of your child what you are not doing yourself! For this reason we have created a unique parent participation program that is part of Running River School.

Since we consider parent involvement part of the core foundation of Running River School, as stated on the parent's contract, we will have these guidelines:

Parent Program

All parents (minimum of one per family) are asked to participate in the Parent Program. If the outlined requirements are not met the Director and Board have the option of cashing your post dated \$70 a month parent program checks at the end of the month.

- Attend monthly Parent Forums
- Participate in the classroom once a week for an hour of class time all year
- Or, go on a field trip, hike or participate in a special project for approximately 4 hours once a month all year
- Actively participate on a Project Team all year

1. The Parent Forum

At the Parent Forum we talk about children, their needs, their development, what they are doing in school and all the various issues that arise in raising children and providing the best education possible. These Parent Forums are usually held the third Friday of the month from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the school. We ask that both parents attend these meetings unless there is an illness or a parent is out of town, or other such unpreventable situations. We put together a burrito dinner for everyone to enjoy. Children have their own dinner separately and afterwards play with caretakers. Siblings are welcome, so that the whole family can be at the Forum meeting. Please do not bring other children (friends or neighbors).

2. Classroom Involvement

Children love to have their parents come to school and help teach or share their skills! Parents can assist teachers in the classroom curriculum or can teach skills such as: crafts, sports, cooking, building, looking at constellations, or learning about parents' professions.

Each family will commit 4-5 hours a month being in the classroom, going on hikes or field trips. Here is what this could look like:

To create consistency in the classroom we need parents to commit to 1 hour to 1:15 hour time slots once a week for the entire year. The time slots where this would be the most valuable would be during reading,

math, writing or project times, which are the same time each week and where children can benefit the most from closer contact with an adult.

The teachers will train the parents who volunteer.

Hiking, Field Trips and Special Projects:

Another way to contribute is by going on the weekly hikes, field trips, or helping out with special projects. This can include:

- Going on a hike or field trip once a month.
- Helping with individual projects where the small ratio is needed to give every child the attention necessary to pursue a deeper learning experience.
- Helping to set up and be part of special projects like a garden, a big art project, or science project.

Parents are welcomed to be involved more than this requirement.

A schedule will be posted on the bulletin board in the hall, and parents are asked to consistently be on time to serve in their time slot. If you cannot make your usual time slot, please call a parent in the class to substitute for you, and please let the teacher know of the change.

3. Project Teams

All parents will be on a school Project Team. These Project Teams are chosen during the all school orientation, and each team will choose a Project Team Head. All Project Team Heads will report to the Operating Board of Directors. This year, all the Project Teams will be working on our fundraiser. Last year we had a dance, appetizers and silent auction. We have the following Project Teams:

- Marketing
- Food
- Silent Auction
- Entertainment

We also have a Grant-Writing Project Team.

If you need to find other ways to fulfill your parent jobs, please speak to the Director. There are lots of ways to be of help.

Communication is key to working with all these various parent commitments. There are always ways to fulfill your jobs as stated in the

contract and in this handbook. If you do not follow these guidelines, your parent participation fee of \$70 will be cashed at the end of the month.

All School Communication Policy

At Running River, we feel that communication is at the heart of making the school a viable, working, successful community. In order to achieve a goal of mutual respect, including direct, clear, and productive communication, we have set up these guidelines:

Grievance Policy

We ask that all parents and staff follow this policy when difficulties or problems arise in order to maintain and develop strong, open, honest, direct lines of communication. **We ask that issues are not communicated via email, but they are done directly.**

If I am having difficulty with a Teacher, I will:

Go directly to that Teacher to schedule a meeting to discuss the issue.

If I am still having difficulties, and feel that the issue is not being resolved, I will then:

Contact the School Director to schedule a meeting to discuss the issue, with the possibility of meeting with the School Director and the Teacher.

If I am still having difficulties, I will:

Contact a member of the Board of Directors to schedule a meeting to discuss the issue, with the possibility of meeting with the Board member(s), the school Director, and the Teacher.

If I am having difficulty with the School Director, I will:

Go directly to the School Director to schedule a meeting to discuss the issue.

If I am still having difficulties and the problem is not being resolved I will:

Contact a member of the Board of Directors to schedule a meeting to discuss the issue, with the possibility of meeting with the Board member(s), and School Director.

If I am having difficulties with any policy, curriculum or Running River regulations I will:

Go directly to the School Director to schedule a meeting to discuss the issue.

If I am still having difficulties and the problem is not being resolved I will:

Contact a member of the Board of Directors to schedule a meeting to discuss the issue, with the possibility of meeting with the Board member(s), and School Director.

If I am having difficulty with another parent, I will:

Go directly to the parent. If I need help in finding the best way to address the issue with the parent, I will ask a Teacher or the School Director for help.

I will not:

Talk to other teachers or parents about my issues regarding a particular Teacher, the School Director, or the school as a whole.

Staff Directory

Nancy Monson, Director and K-1 Teacher 303-718-2101
nancy@runningriver.org

Megan Flaherty, 2-7 Lead Teacher 303-579-2270 cell
megan@mccool.com 303-664-1102 home

Chris Cain, 2-7 Teacher & Administrator 303-818-7882 cell
cc@mccool.com 303-664-1102
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Art Ives, P.E. Teacher 303-868-6640
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