



Morning Garden Parent-Child Programs



Weekly Class Handbook

Classes Offered:

Parent-Infant Class

For infants from newborn through crawlers

Meets Tuesday mornings from 1:30 – 2:45 pm

Two sessions a year, with Fall and Spring start dates

Parent-Toddler Class

For children walking through 24 months old

Meets Monday mornings from 10:00-11:30am

Two sessions a year, with Fall and Winter/Spring start dates

Weekly Parent-Child Class

For children from two through four years old

Meets Tuesday or Wednesday mornings from 9:30 – 12:00

Three sessions a year, with Fall, Winter and Spring start dates

Two-Day Transition Class

For children 2 by June 1 through turning five years old

Meets Thursday and Friday mornings from 8:30 – 12:00

One session, running from September –May

If you would like additional information or have any questions, please feel free to contact us:

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Welcome to the Morning Garden Program at the Waldorf School of Pittsburgh! We offer a variety of weekly classes for caregivers and their children from infants through four years old. Families are welcomed into a warm and supportive environment where adults can share ideas and form relationships, and children are free to play and explore in a beautiful classroom that nourishes their senses and cultivates their sense of wonder. Our classes incorporate time for play, the domestic arts, child observation, songs, puppetry and snack time, offering parents a firsthand experience of Waldorf early childhood curriculum.



“If a child has been able in his play
to give up his whole loving being to the world around him,
he will be able, in the serious tasks of later life,
to devote himself with confidence and power
to the service of the world.”

~ Rudolf Steiner

DAILY RHYTHM

Just as rhythm is important in sustaining our bodies and the world around us, so it is an integral part of the Morning Garden structure. Our classes have a consistent daily rhythm which helps the children to feel secure and know what will happen next, thus freeing them up to play. We also incorporate the rhythm of the seasons into our activities and stories.

Tuesday and Wednesday Parent-Child Classes Daily Rhythm

- 9:25-9:35 Arrive in classroom / Settle in / Wash hands
- 9:35-10:15 Free play / Snack preparation / Project and work time / Quiet observation time / Set-up for snack
- 10:15-10:20 Clean up rug area
- 10:20-10:30 Circle time
- 10:30-10:50 Snack time
- 10:50-11:10 Clean up from snack / Free play / Complete clean-up of room
- 11:10-11:15 Story time
- 11:15-12:00 Dress to go outside / Walk to play yard / Outdoor play time / Good-bye Song

ARRIVAL and HAND WASHING Coats and bags can be hung up in our shared cubbies, and both children and adults change into indoor shoes or warm slippers. Children are then invited to have their hands gently washed and dried by the teacher before entering the room to play. Some children may not be comfortable doing this at first and that is fine.

As rhythm is so important for young children, please make every effort to arrive on time so that your child can experience the complete morning.

FREE PLAY / SNACK PREPARATION / PROJECT and WORK TIME / SET UP FOR SNACK A lot happens during this time period! This is when the children have time for unstructured, self-directed play. We encourage you to allow your child to roam freely about the room, letting them explore, play, sit and watch others, or join in biscuit making or other work being done in the room, as they choose.

All are welcome to help make the snack biscuits—please wash hands first (if they haven't just been washed) and put on a baking apron. The dough is made before class so it is ready for us to knead, roll out, and cut into biscuits to take to the ovens in the kitchen.

At the same time, some adults might be involved in handwork, an occasional seasonal project, or in the “work of the room.” This work might be watering the plants, folding the laundry, doing the dishes, ironing our napkins, etc. The chalkboard will have a list of ongoing and new things that need to be done to help take care of our room. The children are always welcome to help the adults with their tasks if they choose, and this imitative behavior is gently encouraged.

Toward the end of play time the tables are set for snack. Often the children like to help with this fun task, setting out place mats, bowls, napkins, cups...and food!

QUIET OBSERVATION TIME Once we have settled into our class rhythm, we will set aside a few minutes of our work/play time for quietly observing the children. This will allow you, the parents, to take a break and simply sit back and watch what the children are doing. During this time, I will ask adults to refrain from talking with one another, allowing us all to surround the children with our loving interest. If your child needs you, you may of course quietly attend to them, but we will try to give them the space to play without interruption. We may be surprised at what we notice when observing the children in this way!

CIRCLE TIME “Come follow me along...” A song will let everyone know that it is time to gather on the rug for songs, nursery rhymes and our morning verse. We sing the same songs and verses for about four weeks, as children are nurtured by familiarity and thrive on repetition. The morning verse and a few others will remain constant throughout the season.

Coming together and singing songs is a new experience for most children, and some may not be ready to participate right away. If your child is noisy or running about, you may sit nearby with them and watch the circle. They may quietly play with a small toy on your lap or beside you, but we do ask that they not be wandering around the room getting toys out, as this is distracting to the others.

Even when children are not in circle they are taking in the songs, and parents often find them singing them at home. Also, some of the children sitting in the circle will not sing or do movements, yet they are still deeply engaged, watching and absorbing everything.

SNACK TIME Please feel free to wash your child’s hands at the classroom sink before snack if you’d like. Once we are all seated at the table, we light the candles and then join hands and sing a simple blessing. Then it’s time to eat! We have warm biscuits with butter and jam, apples or other fruit, and to drink, chamomile tea and water. At the end of snack, we snuff out the candles. Washcloths and bowls of warm lavender water are then brought to the tables and we gently wash the children’s hands and faces before they leave the table. Children who are finished may get up and play, while those who are still eating may continue to do so.

Learning to sit for a meal can sometimes take time. We strive to have the children stay at the table while the candles are lit, and if they leave the table we gently encourage them to rejoin us. Please do not allow your child to take snack foods away from the table and eat them elsewhere in the room.

CLEAN UP FROM SNACK / FREE PLAY Some adults and children will help with clearing off the tables and sweeping the floor. A few children (with adult supervision) will want to wash bowls at the water table, while heavily soiled and breakable dishes will need to be washed in the sink. (All of the dishes we use are sanitized daily, as are table tops.) There is a little time for free play, and occasionally we might bring out larger play things such as the slide, tunnel or bean box. One of the children's favorite activities is being swung in a cloth hammock while we sing "Rock-a-Bye-Baby."

FINAL CLEAN UP OF ROOM When the teacher sings the clean-up song and starts picking things up, the adults may join in, encouraging the children to help as they can. They will usually need a specific task, such as "please take this block to the block basket," or "you may tuck this dolly into bed," etc. This is a complete clean-up of the entire room. We need to put everything back in its place!

STORY TIME Now it is time to put our story mats on the rug. We light a candle, lift the silk cloth off the story table, and our story begins. We tell short, simple nature stories and nursery rhymes, as well as an occasional folk tale, accompanied by table puppets. Stories are usually repeated for three or four weeks.

This is a new experience for many children. If a child is noisy or overly fidgety at story time and cannot settle, sometimes sitting on your lap or holding a small doll or other toy will help. If this fails and they are distracting others, it is fine to step out of the room with them for a few minutes until the story is over.

GOING OUTSIDE / OUTDOOR PLAY / GOOD-BYE SONG After the story we put on our outdoor clothing and boots and walk together to the play yard. (Please be mindful that we must cross the driveway and parking lot to get there, so it is important that you or another adult hold your child's hand).

We play outside year-round unless it is raining heavily or extremely cold. This is a wonderful way for the children to experience the same area through the seasons; to see the leaves turn crimson on a tree, fall to the ground, then reappear; to see the bulbs they planted in the fall sprout and bloom in spring; and in winter, to ride their sleds where they had only recently been pulling their friends along in the wagon.

Just before noon we will tidy up the play yard, come together in a circle and sing a short good-bye song.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS

PARENT'S ROLE IN THE CLASSROOM With all of the activity, it is easy to get caught up in work or conversation, but we do ask that each parent remain attentive to and responsible for their child. We want to ensure that materials are used appropriately: for example, we build with

blocks (we do not throw them!). Also, conflicts between children will arise occasionally, so it is important that parents (and teachers) keep an eye out so that we can keep everyone safe. Behaviors such as hitting and pushing are not unusual in children of this age. Sometimes children are able to resolve little tussles on their own, and it is important that they have the opportunity to do so, as this helps them build resilience. If we intervene in every situation, the children will not learn the skills they need to navigate the world. There are times, however, when an adult does need to intervene. It can be helpful if we first acknowledge the situation: “I see that you both want to play with that truck. Let’s get another one.” Sometimes redirection can also be helpful: “You may come help me cut the apples now.” If a child becomes upset or disruptive it is fine to take them out of the room for a few minutes until they have calmed down. Please know that we see these behaviors frequently! Most young children do not know how to share or take turns at this age. However, if we model appropriate responses to conflict and allow them some space to work things out on their own, they will learn these social skills in time.

FREE PLAY If we allow the children to play and explore freely we are nurturing one of their greatest gifts: their imagination. While the children are playing we try not to direct their play or to help them when they do not need help. We also strive not to interrupt the flow of play by asking them questions about what they are doing, or asking them to come out of play to help with a project. We want the children to have the opportunity to develop their social skills, so we encourage parents not to sit and play with them for extended periods of time unless necessary. Also, please be aware that at this young age many children will play by themselves or “side by side,” as they are not yet developmentally ready to engage in interactive play with others.

IMITATION and WORK OF THE ROOM Young children are completely given over to their physical surroundings; they absorb and imitate everything that they encounter in their environment. It is very important that what children see and hear be worthy of imitation. By having parents do work in the room, we are not trying to have you do our menial chores. The main purpose is to be doing a task, no matter how trivial, with care and reverence, in order to be a model of meaningful activity for the children. Children love to assist with tasks and often a child will come over to you and want to help, and we gently and patiently encourage this help. They may just want to watch, and that is fine too. We’ve found that if our hands are busy with a project, room work or handwork, we can often observe our children while we work and talk quietly with the other adults.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

PARKING The designated parking area for Morning Garden families is along the driveway in front of the school. You may park here between 8:25 am and 12:15 pm. Please enter the driveway from Winebiddle Street and pull up as far as you can, in order to ensure that there are enough spaces for everyone. You may also park along Coral Street between Winebiddle and the school driveway, as long as your car is removed before 2:00, when that area is reserved for school buses.

INDOOR SHOES and CLOTHING Please bring indoor shoes or slippers for yourself and your child to wear while in the classroom. Our floors are tile and can be cold as well as slippery, so socks alone will not be sufficient. Also, to comply with fire code regulations, we are to have “shoes” on at all times. You may leave indoor shoes at school if you like.

Our room temperature varies, so it’s a good idea to layer clothing, especially during the colder months. Also, as we spend a portion of each class day outside, please come prepared for the weather so that both you and your child can enjoy our time in the play yard. For much of the year the play yard can be muddy, so we highly recommend rain pants and rubber boots. Snowsuits are a necessity in the winter time, along with hats, mittens and warm boots.

CAREGIVERS Please know that while this is called a “parent-child” class, other loving caregivers are also welcome to bring your child. We have had grandparents, nannies and aunts bring children in the past. What is important is that the caregiver be someone who has warmth and love for the child. We recommend that the caregiver be consistent and have an interest in participating in the class.

SIBLINGS Babies and younger siblings are always welcome to come to our parent-child classes. Please note that once a younger sibling is 18 months old he or she will be counted as an enrolled member of the class and an additional tuition payment may be required. If older siblings are off school on a day that we meet, they are welcome to come visit. We do ask that you please inform the teacher in advance.

CELL PHONES and LEAVING THE ROOM Morning Garden class time provides us with a special opportunity to focus on being with the children, so we ask that you please refrain from using cell phones in the classroom and in the play yard. If you need to make a call or send an email, etc., please ask another adult to keep an eye on your child and step out into the hallway for a few moments.

SNACK We use organic ingredients in the biscuits and purchase organic fruit when possible. If your child has any food allergies that we should be aware of, please let us know. The biscuits contain whole wheat and unbleached flours, rice milk, plain yogurt, applesauce, oil and honey, but the recipe can be adjusted if needed.

BIRTHDAYS We honor children’s birthdays in a simple, gentle way during snack time. We sing a special song as we light a candle for the birthday child. Then in our quieter voices we all sing “Happy Birthday.” You may bring a special treat to share if you like, but there is no obligation to do so.

NUT FREE ROOM Our classroom, as well as the entire first floor of the school, is a nut-free area. Please do not bring any snacks or other food containing nuts into the classroom.

BATHROOMS and DIAPERING Please feel free to use the bathroom whenever the need arises. There is a visitor’s bathroom located to the right of the large staircase. There is a diaper changing table in the handicapped accessible bathroom located down the hallway behind the staircase, and there are additional children’s bathrooms at the end of that hall and to the left.

ILLNESS and ABSENCE If your child is not feeling well, please keep them at home where they can be given the extra care and attention they need. If a child has been running a fever, they should not return to school until they have been fever-free for 24 hours. The same 24-hour rule also applies to symptoms such as vomiting and diarrhea.

We appreciate knowing if you are not going to be able to make it to class. If possible, please call the school's front office and they will relay your message to the teachers.

SNOW DELAY or CANCELLATION If the Waldorf School is closed we do not have class. If the school has a 2-hour delay we DO have class and will start in our room at 10:00. All families should have registered to receive school notifications when they enrolled online via TADS. Cancellations and delays are also announced on local TV stations. Please contact the Front Office with any questions.

FIRE DRILLS The school has a fire drill once a month in compliance with state regulations. If one takes place while we are in class, our procedure is to leave the room immediately, exit the front door and walk out to the sidewalk in front of the school. Please do not take the time to get coats, outdoor shoes, etc. If you are not in the room when the fire drill occurs, please exit through the nearest door.

MORNING GARDEN PARENT LIBRARY We have a small collection of books on Waldorf Education, parenting and family life that may be checked out for two weeks at a time. Please use the provided sign out sheet (on the clipboard) to check out books and mark when they have been returned. The library is available only to parents enrolled in the Morning Garden classes.