

WILDFLOWERS NATURE SCHOOL

PARENT HANDBOOK Preschool program

2018 – 2019

Location:

10570 Mill Station Road
Sebastopol, CA 95472

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 54
Graton, CA 95444

Owner/Director/Mentor (teacher): Bev Buswell 707-479-1052

Owner/Farmer/Substitute Mentor: Mark Buswell 707-481-2710

Mentor/Assistant Director: Brook Syme 707-494-7475

PHILOSOPHY

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Education has come so far from the original, innate way that humans learned for millennium. Kids learned by discovery, experimentation and very keen awareness. With extended family always around in natural settings, kids used to observe, explore, question, and imitate their mentors in a natural setting. (Which is why we try to call our teachers here “mentors”.) At Wildflowers Nature School, we try to allow the space for that unfolding of inquisitiveness and exploration, for experiencing the wonder and the spirit in special moments in nature. For in those moments, lies the heart of education that will last a lifetime.

VISION STATEMENT

Running with the natural exuberant wonder of a child, we nurture academic inquisitiveness, confidence, imagination, creativity, and a connection to, gratitude for and understanding of the world around them. This will become a solid place within each child that they can continually return to for growth, values, compassion, wisdom and joy in their lives. By fostering a love of nature, these children will naturally develop practices of stewardship, sustainability and respect for the beauty and fragility of the planet.

CATERING TO THE INDIVIDUAL

We have a tremendous respect for the essence of many styles of education, including Waldorf and Montessori and Reggio. Each child is accommodated according to the child’s nature, the parents’ philosophy, and where the child will be going to school when they leave here. Some kids are driven to read at barely 4 without prompting and others are not very interested until age 7. We honor the interests of each child and what is important to each family. By using Maria Montessori’s concept of a “prepared environment”, children can choose work here according to their interests and developmental readiness. With our focus on educating outdoors and responding to nature, academia unfolds rather than is sought after.

CLASS SIZE

Generally, we have 12 kids and 2 teachers each day. Children this age are very prone to imitation and most people learn best by relationship. It is unnatural for a child to be in large group of kids. Most learning throughout human history was done by mentoring, with the learner working alongside, watching, copying, & asking questions of the mentor. Most didn’t feel they were being “schooled”, but rather thought they were just hanging out with someone who knew cool stuff. Large groups tend to create chaotic moments and bad habits that generate seeking of attention, differentiation and belonging. Instead, we join the child in co-explorations and nurture respect for each other and celebration of who each child is.

PROGRAM

PRESCHOOL PROGRAM: We focus on the natural world here, as it's integral to the human core, especially in early childhood. We honor childhood here, recognizing the need to be outdoors, for imaginary play, and the sense of wonder intrinsic to this age. We practice emergent curriculum (responding to kids' interests, adjusting plans in the moment) and know the sensitive period of readiness children exhibit. We're totally outdoors except for part of our rainy days (& "potty train"). Our days are filled with circle, exploring nature, caring for animals and plants, finding critters & tracks, doing primitive or nature arts and crafts, immersing in imaginative play, and developing a keen use of our senses. The kids enjoy farm life here, growing food we eat and raising farm animals. 3-4 kids/week get a turn cooking lunch featuring food from the gardens and wild foods. In the fall, we are quite focused on the harvest season, including the kids setting up a farm stand for parents. Often some older kids write signs or play store, as our farm stand is a great opportunity for math and writing. We believe the most important things to learn in any preschool environment are graces and courtesies, cooperation and social skills. We have a peace curriculum that pro-actively creates and reinforces an environment that supports and nurtures these skills, that enhances self-concept, and celebrates the most important value for lifelong happiness: **gratitude**. We are always ready when opportunities emerge to incorporate learning the alphabet, math and Spanish. Kids draw in their nature journals & dictate as the teacher writes about their picture. Mentors assist emerging writers to write so that by the end of their last year here many do a lot of the writing in their nature journals. We have art projects often, both open ended (including available art projects on shelves they choose), as well as teacher-led art (such as Waldorf's "Wet on Wet" watercolor), and utilize resources found in nature often. We have music at circle time every day. Wednesdays are generally special music days, featuring Farmer Buzz who brings his guitar, banjo, or ukulele. We progress from a focus on pure enjoyment to rhythm, melody, instruments, dance, and music genres. We'll take the kids to the symphony this year. A couple of times/year the children perform some of the songs they've learned and sometimes a play. About 1/3 of our children go on to Waldorf schools, about 1/3 to standard public schools, and about 1/3 split into private schools & homeschool programs. We find we accommodate all those families well, listening to what parents & kids want from their experience here.

AGE & RATIOS

We have a maximum of 12 children. Children must be 3 years old and fully potty trained by September 1st (with some rare sibling / temperament exceptions). There are 2 teachers whenever there are more than 6 kids. Multi-age classrooms provide beautiful opportunities for leadership and mentoring between students. If kids are going on to 1st grade straight from here, we'll consider accepting them on a case-by-case basis. If we get several who want to do their kindergarten year here together, we're more likely to accept kindergarteners.

CALENDAR

Our preschool program goes from the day after Labor Day to the 2nd week in June, taking off Thanksgiving week, 2 weeks at the end of December and the 1st week of January, 1 week in February, & 2 weeks in spring. We call our February break “Snow Week”, as we encourage our families to take at least a day to drive to the snow for children to play. We strongly encourage family camping in each season, as that provides more opportunities for children to connect with nature than anything.

RHYTHM

Rhythm is very important to young children at home, but especially important as they take their 1st steps into the world beyond their family. It gives them reassuring comfort of control in a world of big people who make decisions for them. That being said, children are also playful and full of wonder. The world provides so many teachable moments that we adults must stay flexible to meet the joy, opportunities, and comfort level of any given time. As the kids get more comfortable here, we may rearrange schedules if we see an improvement that better fits the needs of the kids. Below is a sample schedule, though it may change next year.

Here is a **sample schedule**:

9-9:30	Arrive, free play, short activity option such as “farm chores”, garden, or art
9:30-10	Music
10-10:20	Snack
10:20-11	“Potty Train” (they get a little inside play during this time)
11-12	Activity – gardening, art, farm stand prep, nature wanders, science, cooking, etc.
12-12:30	Lunch
12:30-1:25	Free play, game, cleanup, gather eggs, etc.
1:25-1:45	Storytime (kids are asked to lay down for the story)
1:45-1:55	Goodbye circle
1:55-2	Kids gather stuff & go to gate to greet parents

The afternoon is moved up about 5 to 10 minutes on farm stand days (fall) when possible.

DETAILS, POLICIES & PROCEDURES

CLOTHING

Second-hand stores and garage sales should have most everything they need except rain pants, which can be found at Sebastopol Hardware, REI, LLBean, Lands' End, etc. This is an outdoor-based program and we spend almost all our time outside every day, rain or shine, cold or hot. Kids learn the lesson of what we can gain by just dressing appropriately for the weather. We also believe that playing in dirt or mud is an important part of most children's experience of exploring nature. To ensure your child is protected from the elements, and accordingly, feeling comfortable to fully engage in play and exploration, please have appropriate clothes available:

- *All seasons (every day):* one to two full changes of clothes
- **Nov. to May (and any foggy day or when it's rained within 2 weeks):** *rain boots*, a real winter jacket, hat & gloves, waterproof raincoat and rain pants
- *May, June, September, October (& any heat spell):* shorts & t-shirt or summer dress, swimsuit & sunhat

Thoughts on shoes: **From Nov.-May, most mornings the dew on the grass will soak through most shoes in 15 minutes. During those months, kids must come in rain boots here.**

Not a bad idea to bring a change of shoes for later in the day when the dew's gone. They'll have more comfort & agility. Ease of getting shoes on & off is important as we take shoes off if we go inside to go to the bathroom or cook and often kids want their shoes off at circle & story time on our blanket. Hiking boots or work boots are great when it's not too wet outside, as kids can avoid wet feet, but still have good agility to climb trees and run, **but they are very hard to get on & off.** There are a few types of waterproof shoes that are easy to get on & off that kids can still be agile in (Mucks lowtops, etc.). Please be advised that we do allow bare feet. If you are not comfortable with this, please let us know and we'll do our best to honor your preference.

Keeping warm – **In cold weather, 2 pairs of socks or one very thick pair should be worn under rain boots. A winter jacket is not just a fleece jacket or a lined raincoat.** It should have a good deal of padding to insulate the child from cold. Long underwear or tights underneath clothes is recommended during winter here and is **essential** in cold snaps. Layering is great, as temperatures can be in the 30's at 9am and then 70's at 2pm. If there are layers we might not notice, let us know so we can remove long johns, etc. as the day unfolds.

Please label everything your child brings to school. Please provide one full change of clothes in a daypack or ziplock bag (for outside) and one full change in a box (we provide) that will stay in the bathroom. Please remember to replace spares that come home.

HANDWASHING

We teach kids the following hand washing procedure: 1. Roll up sleeves, 2. **Wet hands**, 3. THEN Apply 1 pump of soap or roll bar in hands 3 turns, 4. Make bubbles, 5. Use bubbles to scrub hands, 6. Rub hands together in rinse water (or flowing water), 7. Rub dry. Getting hands wet before applying soap teaches them a) a method that works whether it's bar or liquid soap, and b) not to wash the soap off before using it to scrub. If they learn the same procedure at home & school, it's easier. (If you prefer a different system, let us know).

“POTTY TRAIN”

is what we call it when we bring a group of kids inside to use the bathroom. By the beginning of school, children must be potty trained and comfortable using the toilet away from home. Please either have your child use the bathroom *right before* leaving home or take them to the school bathroom upon your arrival (especially important for those with more than a 20 minute ride here). Children will be taught to let a teacher know if they need to go to the bathroom & we'll take him/her there. Our daily routine of “the potty train” at about 10:30 is often all that most children need. We'll assist younger children with reminders to “check in with their body” at other times. For some, we schedule a regular extra potty visit. We understand in September that some kids are freshly potty-trained so that in the 1st couple of months we will wipe after a BM *if* they ask, but always along with instruction how to wipe themselves. For those asking for help, we do 1st & last wipe & they do 2nd & if need it more wipes, working towards getting them to do it all by themselves by October. If your child doesn't wipe themselves, we highly recommend you begin this at home.

“DO IT MYSELF”

In a society of so many 1-2 children families, many kids are very used to parents doing things for them way beyond the necessity. For some kids, parents staying & guiding helps keep them on task. With others, that gives them an opportunity for a battleground and it's best to set them up for success, express confidence, and then step away. Most need a continuum along that over time, from assistance to self-sufficiency. Here at school, they will put their own shoes on & off, go to the bathroom & wash hands without physical help, & take their coat off & on & put their belongings where they go. At lunchtime, they take their lunch out of their lunchbox, put contents on a plate, wait until we have a moment of silence, feed themselves, put their leftovers in lunchbox & compost, wash their plate, & put their lunchbox in their cubby. At the end of the day, kids pack their backpack & carry it, their jacket & lunchbox to the gate. Please do not rescue them when they drop their pack 20 feet from the gate and tell you “YOU carry it”. Set up these “practical life” activities well at home. Give them the gift of rhythm, pride, and a sense of capability and confidence, by taking the time for gentle instruction, a “prepared environment”, and a lot of patience. (Note: Of course there are times we need to honor true tiredness in little ones. We give plenty of nurturing, too.) Often parents need our assistance in getting kids to cooperate in rhythms such as caring for belongings and dressing for the weather. Do not hesitate to ask! Parents and teachers are a team here.

WATER

Each child should have a water bottle **that will not drip when on its side** and have their name on the bottom AND top in permanent marker. Your child should be able to open it & close it easily. We'll wash weekly and fill daily. If you should bring it home, remember to BRING IT EVERY DAY, wash & fill it, and when arriving, please put water bottle into the basket.

TICKS

Of course, a school with a focus on nature is going to spend time in wild natural areas. Please check your child EVERY SINGLE DAY when your child returns home. Long pants with tick repellent on them add protection. Deer ticks are extremely small. Ask us for a “tick card” if you aren't positive how to ID them. If you find a tick, take it to Sonoma County Health Dept. for test and let us know results, please. If it bit your child (or you), see a Dr. versed in Lyme Disease as most family practitioners dismiss the realities of the disease.

MENTORS (teachers)

Whenever we have more than 6 kids, we'll have 2 mentors (what we call teachers here). Sometimes a mentor will take a week *or a **few months off***. We plan on hiring another mentor for 1-2 days/wk so that we have another that the kids know, in case we need a sub or a temporary replacement. Just think of it as 4 mentors sharing 2 spots. We'll issue a schedule in the fall, but it might be necessary to change it as the year unfolds.

- Bev Buswell is the director, owner, and one of the teachers. She has a degree in Environmental Education and some training in Waldorf & Montessori. Bev has been involved in mentoring youth in some format for 40 years (since she was a teenager). She has experience as a Montessori teacher, Waldorf preschool teacher, garden teacher, park naturalist, environmental education director, teacher aide, reading specialist, scout leader, parent & grandparent. Bev brings creativity, spark, energy, & leadership.
- Brook Syme is a fully Waldorf and Lifeways trained teacher with much experience. She has taught at Summerfield Waldorf School, Live Oak Waldorf, Sebastopol Independent Charter School, & her own Lifeways program, as well as a couple of Farm Camps. Brook is very creative, bringing not only traditional Waldorf arts such as “wet on wet” watercolor, but a world of inventive crafts and arts. She adds the centered, solid ground here, calming every moment with her cheery unrattled smiling being, and filling the void with love. Reminding us of the sanctity and beauty of childhood, she helps keep our balance. Having raised two children, she understands what raising children is like.
- Mark Buswell, aka Farmer Buzz, is also very involved in the school as the music teacher, occasional sub, bookkeeper, fixer upper and daily finder of cool stuff to show kids ☺. Buzz brings the practical, the special, the connection to the land & the birds. He brings out the shy kids often, as he quietly shares his stories.
- SUBS: Many of our subs have advanced training and amazing experience. Jamie Malone taught here many years and has a Masters in Education with a focus on wilderness education and a teaching credential, and 4 daughters. Lisa Breschi-Almond has a Master’s, her Waldorf teaching certificate, and 2 sons, and taught regularly here for many years. We always try to have a few parents in the school here go through the teacher approval process (criminal background check, etc.), as they make wonderful subs since the kids are comfortable with them and they are familiar with our program. If you find yourself called to working with your child’s class beyond the occasional volunteer help, please let us know!

FORMS

The following are the forms you need:

1. Registration Form (<i>application can do</i>)	6. Identification and Emergency Information
2. Contract & Waiver (<i>which references Calendar & this document</i>)	7. Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment
3. Health & Safety Information (<i>CA state form</i>)	8. Acknowledgement of receipt of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Notification of Parents’ Rights• Caregiver Background Check Process• Consumer Awareness Information
4. Wildflowers Health & Safety Form	
5. Immunization Record (<i>“blue card”</i>)	9. Food Program Enrollment Form

(FORMS, continued) We're also including an optional form for Medication Permission in the registration pkt. We'll only administer what is expressly authorized by parents on the form. I suggest writing in "Children's Tylenol"; "Arnica" (homeopathic – calms most bigger owies); "Benadryl"; "antiseptic", & "sunscreen". Please don't rely on us to apply sunscreen, though. We suggest applying it every morning before sending them here. Many of these kids have not had a bee sting before nor other things they might show severe allergy to. It would be a good idea, in case of extreme possibly life or death reaction, to have permission to give a child's dose of Benadryl for the rare possibility that they go into an anaphylactic reaction to something.

VACCINES

I do not take a position that children should or should not get vaccines according to schedule, but I personally believe it should be up to parents, not the state, to decide. Since we are a licensed facility, however, we need to follow the law. Parents need to provide a copy of immunizations so that we can fill out the state mandated form we call "The Blue Card. If you do not vaccinate your child per the official recommended schedule, the following info is important for you to know: Every child attending any learning institution must, by law, be vaccinated according to the official recommended schedule unless they either already had a Personal Beliefs Exemption on file with us ("grandfathered in") or have a **medical exemption**. For those who are on the fence about (or against) vaccinating, here are my recommendations:

1. Please look into the good hard science, not websites of personal stories, not some book of ranting in a single direction. But rather do a thorough review of multiple studies done by reputable institutions or researchers in an unbiased fashion with a scientific method. **The ignorance (as in ignoring) of real science in our culture lately goes contrary to an educated society.** I know it's not easy to sort through all the conflicting studies on this difficult issue.
2. Talk to your well trained medical professional for their opinion.
3. If you decide you want to veer from the state recommendations, if you provided us with a Personal Beliefs Exemption (state form) before Jan.1, 2016, you're good to go. If it's after Jan. 1, you'll need a licensed physician to sign that your child has a special medical reason (which can be just family history) why they shouldn't follow the immunization schedule ("Medical Exemption"). If you need to know of a local Dr., ask us.

WORKING FARM

Wildflowers is a working farm. We have gardens and chickens, and may have goats or turkeys or sheep. There are **inherent dangers at a farm** including, but not limited to, shelters made of scrap lumber & chicken wire, tractors, tools, fertilizers, fencing that ranges from scrap wire to electric wire to barbed wire, etc. Choosing to attend here is an acknowledgement and **acceptance of that risk** in light of the benefits here. Farm kids get used to the life cycle of animals. They may witness births or deaths. They may find dead animals if we find gophers in the traps, or wild animal kills, or death by natural causes. We also have a nature museum of pelts & frozen animals we show a few times. Kids also will know that *when they aren't here* we do sometimes kill our animals to eat them & we may (1-2x/yr) serve our farm-raised goat or chicken at lunch. Kids under 5 actually seem to not be bothered by this, but if they are not exposed to it under 5, they can have a hard time with it at 7-10. Seeing where food comes from (both animal & plant) is so important. We'll touch on the benefits of eating food you know the origin of and eating meat that's raised humanely with love. If you're vegetarian, note that on Health form so we can verbally honor that with your child. We've accommodated (more like embraced!) raw foodists, vegans, paleos, and many other diets here beautifully.

ILLNESS & MEDICATIONS

If a child has had any of the following symptoms in the last 24 hours before a school morning, please don't bring them to school: fever, vomiting, upset stomach, stomach ache, sore throat, diarrhea, skin problems, body aches, sneezing, coughing, eye or nose drainage or any other symptom you think might indicate they are just coming down with something. For your children's & other's health, please be ok with he/she having a **full day of wellness** before returning. Many times, a child comes back to school without that extra day of rest and is so tired they end up in tears to go home. Other times, the illness takes its next turn. If you have any questions or your child just tends to have a runny nose or a cough for days after an illness, **talk to the teacher**. If medication is necessary for your child (including SUNSCREEN!), there is a state form to fill out. Please **DO NOT** give child medicine to bring to school (**even sunscreen, vitamins, cough drops, herbs & homeopathic meds**). If there have been contagious illnesses recently in your household, please inform us (flu, etc.).

LOCAL OR NATIONAL EMERGENCIES

We reserve the right to close the school for a period of time if the administration believes that it is necessary for the safety of the children or adherence to law. If local schools (especially our closest one, Oak Grove), are closed, we'll lean towards taking their lead and closing. There have been 3 occasions in the past that we've needed to do that: 1) an outbreak of (possibly) swine flu, 2) local flooding & power outages, 3) unhealthy air quality due to smoke. These are considered circumstances beyond our control and no reimbursement will be given to families for tuition paid for that time. Note: The Health Dept. has hinted that if there's a local outbreak of a disease that kids are vaccinated for, kids without that vaccine may not be allowed to attend our licensed program for a while.

LICENSE

There is no state license for a "preschool". That term notes a type of program. There are licenses for "Day Care Centers" and "Family Child Care Homes". We are the latter at the moment. It takes a lot to get and keep such accreditation. It's possible as the year unfolds that we may become more officially a "camp" as the state unrolls that option.

TOYS FROM HOME

To avoid conflicts, we ask that toys from home stay home. We however think that "show and tell" is important for kids to develop social confidence and verbal literacy. Children can bring in items **that teach us something** (nature items, unique pets, books, small machines, antiques, musical instruments, etc.). We won't always get to it that day, but at least the next day we will have your child "show and tell" during circle or story time. **No toys or anything with TV/movie characters, please**. Small items from the natural world belonging to the season we are celebrating (or to all seasons) can be donated or loaned to our Nature Shelves/Table at any time and/or shared in circle, as well.

DISCIPLINE (“Peacemaking”)

With our pro-active peace curriculum, discipline is generally a non-issue. We have many tools for peace, from the “Peace Council” and talking stick, to recognizing Peacemakers, to role playing, puppet shows, songs, plays & stories. An important part of our program is giving children skills to navigate social situations. When children have a conflict, we help them identify and communicate their feelings and needs, understand the others’, listen, and respond in a way that creates peace. We give them exact language sometimes & through repetition, within a couple of months phrases can be heard like “Can I have a turn with that when you’re done with it, please?” and “It hurts my feelings when you...”, and “I feel...” Only about every 2-3 years, we have a child or two who needs to be escorted to “a peaceful space” (tipi, fort,) where he/she can “look inside himself”, sometimes with our help, sometimes by him/herself (always with us nearby and conversing afterwards). At that point, parent-teacher conferences are critical to create a unified team to assist the child in finding his/her peaceful true nature. If we feel a child is creating a situation where he/she or other children are repeatedly not safe, we’ll institute a strict policy of sending the child home immediately after each infraction. Parents need to be available to pick up in these situations. If the behavior continues, a child may be dismissed from our program with the tuition pro-rated (no refund of deposit or enrollment fee).

FOUND OBJECTS AT SCHOOL

Anything found on the property belongs to the school & owners, including but not limited to arrowheads and other historical artifacts, special rocks, etc. We do encourage nature collections by children so there will be plenty of natural objects they’re allowed to take.

PARKING

Wildflowers is located on a private drive that is shared with 2 other households. PLEASE, for this program to continue, it is imperative that everyone give the neighbors the utmost respect by **driving slowly and only parking in the driveway area of the school. Please pull as far in as possible to allow for the other cars to park in our driveway. Please don’t park along the shared driveway!!!** Apples, grapes, & raspberries on driveway belong to neighbors. Lastly, but most important, be VERY CAREFUL pulling in & out, as children are hard to see. Keep children close to you when walking so that they are safe at pick-up & drop-off times.

CARPOOLING

This will be our 1st year not financially rewarding carpooling. Parents need to be able to adapt to illness, appointments, etc., without everyone concerned about taking the carpool discount but not carpooling. However, **we really, really need everyone who can to carpool here!!!** This program works on this little lane because almost everyone carpools. If we have 12 cars arriving every 9am & 2pm, it will be chaos. We are going to try this experiment to see if, by Oct.1, most people will carpool out of: **1) duty to the planet, 2) compassion for the neighbors, 3) wanting to contribute to safety of our parking lot, 4) helping dropoff & pickup to flow smoothly, 5) building community, 6) helping our kids learn to be brave, friendly, and open to new situations, and 7) making new friends.**

PICK-UP AUTHORIZATION

If someone's not listed on the "Identification and Emergency Information" form as someone your child can go home with, we will not be able to release your child to them unless it is amended by you in writing. If your child is going to be picked up by someone other than parent or carpool parent, please let us know (both on sign-in form & verbally) which of the authorized people will be picking up. Appropriate car seats are required for everyone that still legally requires one. I strongly recommend that any parents driving children other than their own should carry info on the child & parents, as well as permission to authorize medical treatment needed in an emergency.

DROP-OFF & PICK-UP PROCEDURE

Drop-off is at 9am and pick-up is at 2pm. Please NEVER drop off or pick up a child without signing in or out. Please remind anyone else who is driving to sign in & out. The sign-in/out sheet is hanging by the bulletin board under the awning against North side of house. Visual or verbal acknowledgement by staff is required upon delivery of children. **DROPOFF:** At 9am, bring child into schoolyard, put lunchbox and daypack in cubby, put water bottle in the basket, deliver children to us or let us know that they're here, then sign-in & read whiteboard for important messages for the day on your way out. After a couple of months, if your child gets responsible, capable, & comfortable with putting their stuff where it goes, it's ok to just let them in the gate as long as you've made positively sure a teacher knows that they have been delivered into our care. If you arrive before 9am, please wait until 9 to get them out of the car so that teachers can finish preparing for the day. **PICKUP:** At 2pm, children will carry their own belongings as we escort them to the gate to meet parents. Please encourage kids to continue to carry at least some of their belongings and keep going right to the car. This helps prevent problems from kids in that transition of supervision. If parents are chatting and the kids are playing, they can easily push their boundaries by going into areas that are not set up for kids. **Please try to be off school premises by 2:15.** Teach them to never enter the pavement without being next to their parent /driver. Be very aware of your children near the parking areas. FYI: The tall redwoods are fine to climb afterschool, but safety is up to YOU, reminding them how & making sure they're not getting too high up. Ask "Is that branch alive or dead?", "Is that branch as big as your arm?", & "Is your foot or hand right next to the trunk?"

SAYING GOODBYE

It can be a delicate issue for some children whether their parent stays for a while and how long. If a child does not know when the parent is leaving, there can be constant stress waiting for that moment and he/she may never fully settle. Be very careful not to let them know you are worried about how they will do. Children take a parent's nervousness as a signal that it might not be safe. ***That's why over-protective parents cause insecure children.*** We pride ourselves on many successes here of kids who had strong separation anxiety, learning gently and securely that it's ok to be without mom & dad and then reaping the rewards (pride; fun with other kids). The majority of children are fine from the 1st day. Of the remainder, most let go without tears within 2 weeks. Most tears upon goodbye last about 2-3 minutes. If you have a child who may have a concern about your departure, let's make a plan together *ahead*. For those kids, weekly conferences in those 1st weeks are good. Children are very different in what helps them with goodbye. It's important is to tell your child what will happen and then do that. *Let them know you have confidence that they will do fine.* Play dates with other children and spending time with them gardening, etc. here really helps. Don't hesitate to ask.

COMMUNICATION

Personal info that might be needed on some days, such as whether a child didn't eat breakfast, had a "melt-down", stayed up very late the night before, has a runny nose, etc. is best communicated verbally with us. If anything major occurs (such as divorce, death in the family, etc.), please try to contact us the day before school. It can be hard to pay full attention when parents are coming & going at drop-off time. If you need to contact a teacher during the school day, the best method is by text, but no guarantee we will check texts during class either.

CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences are encouraged at least twice a year. September and January are good times, but feel free to schedule a conference at any time during the year. It's recommended that both parents attend and children do not, so please plan ahead. One good way to do this is for 2 families to trade off and care for kids in our schoolyard.

CHATTING

Having time for parents and teachers to chat together is important in keeping an ongoing open communication process so that we are a team educating and caring for your child here. Daily check-ins are often important. Having time for parents to chat with each other can be an important part of building community. But please keep 5 things in mind: 1) Never speak about sensitive matters or children in front of children. 2) Unless it's important about that very day, please reserve chatting with teachers for after school and reserve any morning chatting with parents to outside of the area we are settling kids in (outside gate, etc.). At the beginning of school, it is best for our focus to be on helping children settle in. 3) Please respect that teachers need to get to their afternoon routines, so if you need more than about 10 minutes, it's best to schedule some time together or at least ask if it's an ok time to speak more at length. 4) Afterschool & especially at events, please keep your children under your watchful eyes at all times. 5) Please be mindful of beneficial speech, avoiding gossip and negativity.

FAMILY AS RESOURCE

Children, families, & staff all benefit when family members come to school to share music, stories, foods, traditions, cultural information, hobbies, interests, skills or careers. Grandparents are a great resource, bringing the elder in as a revered resource. A great way for kids to be exposed to cultural geography is if a family adopts a week to present a country (maybe their country of heritage or just one they're interested in). You could provide us with recipes or food or cooking help for one of our regular lunches and a presentation during the week at circle time. Or just come to circle time sometime & present something interesting.

VOLUNTEERING

The garden and nature space are a very important part of your child's program here. **We need a volunteer every Thursday from 11 to 12:15 to help one teacher and 4 kids prepare lunch.** If you can't do every Thursday, perhaps you can offer say the "1st & 3rd Thursday", etc. Families are expected to attend at least 3 of the community workdays, and to sign up to help prepare for or clean up after at least one school event per year as well. Field trips are also important and we need parents to help with driving. Offers to volunteer, whether during school to help kids' activities, or during non-school hours to help with projects, are greatly appreciated.

COMMUNITY WORK DAYS & EVENTS

A core value of this program is to build and foster a sense of community among the Wildflowers' families. We are committed to hosting various events that provide opportunities for families (most including grandparents & siblings) to gather, celebrate, sing, explore, share information, etc. as a collective, cohesive community. These include field trips, campouts, and seasonal celebrations. Families are asked to attend most of the community work days, to create a flourishing environment for your child and to create community.

- Shared experiences cultivate friendships and deepen ties among the Wildflowers' families. Strong communities create strong children.
- Creating community and stewardship (caring for the land) are 2 of the goals of Wildflowers. Our workdays are critical in making that part of the culture here.
- The Workdays provide a unique opportunity for parents and family members to spend time with their children in communal stewardship at Wildflowers. The children tend to show pride, as they tend the land and school/farm structures with family.

Accordingly, we have set aside several workdays throughout the year. **We expect that every Wildflowers' family can commit to participating in at LEAST 3 Workdays per school year.** We understand that there are times when your family has commitments that conflict with these workdays. At such times, please ask Bev about possibilities for alternative, flexible work assignments. If you feel the workdays are something you cannot generally do, please note that on the application. In that case, you could opt for a one-time \$200 donation to the school instead. Though your child will miss a very sweet part of our program. We also offer "mini workdays", which are shorter, often on weekdays, and often on short-notice.

SUSTAINABLE EATING

From the most local of our environments (our bodies) to the most global, the most sustainable food system thrives on fresh, locally produced foods. Please try to send zero waste lunches (bulk put in washable containers instead of heavy packaging on individual items). Any waste coming to school with child will go home with child. There's a link for "Wildflowers Food Policy" on our website and should be read thoroughly to adhere to the philosophies of our program.

BIRTHDAYS AND HOLIDAYS

We will have celebrations of gratitude, seasons, and the cycle of life, as well as explore many holiday traditions from cultures around the world. Using a Montessori tradition, each child on their birthday will carry a globe around a "sun" (usually a candle) for each year they are born. Family members are welcome to be present for the celebration, but it's fine if they don't (about half do). A "treat" that day can be brought by the birthday child's family, but it's very important that it's a healthy treat. Please use organic ingredients and leave out sugar and refined flour. See our Sustainable Eating handout for guidelines. Birthday party invitations may be passed out at school **IF** all the students here are invited (can be hard for the uninvited).

LUNCH

On Thursdays, kids will take turns in the kitchen preparing a communal meal from local, organic sources, focusing on foods from the gardens the kids tend or wild foods here. On Tuesdays & Wednesdays, children bring their lunch. Lunch should be in non-disposable containers that are re-usable (baskets, boxes, cloth bags, zip-arounds, etc.). They should have no advertisements or characters from TV, movies, or video games, or intense graphics on them. Please keep in mind that the kids take their lunches out of their containers and put all the food on plates we provide.

SNACK

Please send your child with 2 food containers: 1 for lunch, 1 for snack. **This way, they don't eat all their lunch at snack**, nor drag their whole backpack over to our snack rug. Please don't put random containers and bags loose in their backpack. In our experience, most children have a very hearty appetite at 10am, so please pack a big healthy snack for them. Whatever they don't eat will come back home in their container. We put our snack on cloth napkins the school provides, so that they get their food out & we sing a gratitude song (after listening to the birds) before we all start to eat together. For snack, if they need a utensil, please put that in their container. For lunch, we can. Please don't send liquids for snack as they don't balance well on our rug. For lunch, that's fine.

TV & VIDEO/COMPUTER GAMES

Children who watch TV and video games really DO affect the school environment and other children. Their fantasy and discussion often focuses on scenes from TV or video games. Then school has a culture in which play is based on TV & movies, drawing them & other kids in to that media world. Children talk about &/or act out the scenes because 1) they're in an age of imitation, and 2) often they need to act them out in order to process it. Their subconscious may absorb it as if it actually happened in their living room, not on TV. Their free time should be spent immersed in make believe and creativity. **Kids who watch more than about 1-2 times a month** spend a lot of energy in their make-believe working out the fantasies they have seen and their public speaking time telling us about shows. Every minute they're watching TV they are wiring their brains for thinking passively, being indoors, & needing high media stimulation instead of creatively interacting with the real world. That being said, if they do watch TV, shows of real animals are helpful as that's often the only way to see many of the animals we discuss & track.

ELECTRONIC WORLD VS. NATURAL WORLD

The greatest threat to returning our kids to the nature-based life children have had for thousands of years is today's electronic-based culture. As a group mentoring children to bring them closer to nature, we can create support structures for parents and kids to assist each other to unplug in a plugged-in world. Let's support each other in real-world immersion. Let me know if you would like to have a couple of classes, meetings, support groups, whatever, here to assist families in helping these children now to avoid the epidemic of youth media addiction. How about a "Free for 3" campaign for us all to give up TV together for 3 weeks?

ADMISSION PROCESS

Procedure to apply is:

1. If your family has not had a child in our preschool, at least one parent & the child should take a tour of the school (though any other family members are welcome to come, too).
2. Mail application (2 pages) & \$10 application fee to **10570 Mill Station Road, Sebastopol, CA 95472** **AND** follow with an email version to **info@wildflowerkids.org** by **Feb. 26th**. If you only do 1 (an email or a mailed version), be sure to let Bev know to ensure we receive your application 707-479-1052.
3. Spaces are given with priorities such as alumni, siblings or balancing the class (gender, age, etc.). We'll choose a well-rounded class and inform parents of such decision by Mar.9th. If you apply after that, admission will depend on whether there are any spaces. We may leave a spot or 2 for a particular demographic (i.e.; 4 year old boy, 3 year old girl, etc.) to get the right balance in the class.

Note: We accept applications and students year-round and tuition can be pro-rated.

TUITION

VALUE

We are not your average preschool. We have 12 children, not twenty-something. We have amazing highly trained teachers and pay them way over average to attract such excellence. Our teachers all have extensive education in related fields and have often had master's degrees as well. We have 4 ½ acres for kids to run, climb, and explore in, including forest, field, orchard, and gardens, and backing to a wetland. The kids bond to this land, seeing it over seasons and usually years, doing stewardship activities, building things on it, and crafting using elements of their land here. Nurturing community is a core value of our program and activities to support this are built in throughout the year at no additional cost. There are 1-2 campouts and 3-5 festivals/celebrations per year, celebrating solstice, harvest, and Gratitude, all for the entire family including grandparents. We go on many field trips usually at no extra cost and warmly invite parents, grandparents and siblings to join in on most. As opportunities arise, some years we have specialists such as an art or music or Spanish teacher come to share their passion as well. But most of all, we offer the chance for your child to be in a community of children that spend our days outside, just as their inner spirits call for.

DISCOUNTS

(NOTE: We have discontinued our carpool discount.)

- **FULL PAYMENT UPFRONT: apx 5%**
If you pay the full annual fee by August 31, we apply a 5% discount.
- **SIBLINGS: 10%**
Siblings in the same program at the same time receive 10% off tuition for the 2nd child's tuition. See "registration fee" below for details on the 50% off sibling registration fee.

ANNUAL FEE / INSTALLMENT PLAN

Our tuition is an annual fee, not a monthly fee. Because it can be hard to pay that all at once, we offer an **option** of paying it in an installment plan. It is important to understand the concept of an installment. Installments are payments made on one fee instead of paying the whole fee at once. Most installment plans call for a specific amount due on specific dates. **Installments are not an attempt to charge by the month.** Some months have vacations and some don't, but the installment is the same. We divide the annual fee into 10 payments. One is paid as a deposit to secure the space and the other 9 are due on the 1st of the month from September to May. Paying the fee by installment plan costs about 5% more.

REGISTRATION FEE

There is a one-time \$300 registration fee for new students. Students who are siblings of a previously or presently enrolled preschool alumni that have already paid a registration fee get a 50% discount on the registration fee. It is usually paid at the time of paying the deposit.

RESERVE RIGHT TO CANCEL

If not enough children are signed up for a particular day (Tu, We, or Th), field trip, event, etc., we reserve the right to cancel that day, event, etc. (with appropriate refund) or offer it at a higher rate. If for any unforeseen circumstances, it's absolutely necessary that the school needs to close, we reserve the right to do so and fully refund pro-rated tuition. In the extremely rare chance this would occur, we would give as much advance notice as possible.

LATE PICK-UP FEE

If parents pick up their child more than 10 minutes late without previous arrangement, they may be billed \$10 every 10 minutes they are late. If parents are late without previous arrangement more than 4 times in a school year, the provider has the option of terminating this contract.

DEPOSIT / TERMINATION OF CONTRACT

Once application's accepted, applicant has 10 days to pay deposit to secure spot. The deposit is \$680 for the 3 day program and \$555 for the 2 day program and fully applies to tuition due. If the deposit is paid to reserve a space and then the family decides that the child will not be attending after all, the deposit shall be retained. We're sorry, but 90% of the time this winds up costing us way more than the deposit was in lost tuition until we get the space filled with the right child. Early withdrawal after school starts does not relieve one of the responsibility of upholding the contract for the rest of the annual tuition. This is a contract for services.

BILLING / RECEIPTS

Most months, we do not do regular billing nor give receipts unless requested. If you pay in cash, please ask for a receipt or have us sign one you make upon delivery of cash or send text on spot to person you gave it to so we have record of everyone acknowledging amount. If you're not sure what you owe, a bill can be requested with 7 days notice. Don't hesitate to ask. Occasionally we will bill those who have forgotten to pay, but it may be after late fee's charged. All installments are due on the 1st of each month.

INSUFFICIENT FUNDS

Bounced checks will incur a fee of \$25. If more than 2 checks bounce in the year, we have the option of requiring the rest of the year's tuition be paid up front or possibly asking the family to give up their spot to someone on the waitlist who has sufficient funds.

LATE PAYMENTS

Whether we bill or not, any bills left unpaid will incur a **late charge of \$30 on the 10th** of every month. If you're having financial difficulties, please contact Bev to discuss options. On the 10th of a 2nd month of not paying installments, unless prior arrangements are made, the student will not be allowed to return to school until the bill is paid. However, if payments are not completed by May 15th, unless other arrangements have been made quite in advance, child will be withdrawn from the school and not allowed to attend graduation and end-of-the-year campout. Anyone leaving an unpaid bill for 2 months after leaving our school can expect to be taken to small claims court. It's our hope these measures will not be necessary with **early communication, creativity, & mutual respect.**

WORK TRADE

We may be able to arrange, for the 1st few people who ask, to do a work trade for a portion of the tuition. We honor all human beings as being equally worthy of their time so trade is at a flat rate of \$15/hour regardless of task & experience. The worktrade record is turned in by the parent with the associated reduction in tuition. If hours are not put in, full tuition's due.

**** POLICIES & PROCEDURES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE ****

Rev. 2-1-18

WILDFLOWERS NATURE SCHOOL TUITION 2018-19

9-2 : 3 days	
Yearly tuition (if pd by 8/31/18)	6460
Yearly tuition if pay by installment (about 5% more)	6800
Monthly installment (10)	680
9-2: 2 days	
Yearly tuition (if pd by 8/31/18)	5262
Yearly tuition if pay by installment (about 5% more)	5550
Monthly installment (10)	555

**** POLICIES & PROCEDURES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE ****

Rev. 1-22-17