



PARENT HANDBOOK

Table of Contents

School Contact Information	3
Introduction	4
Pedagogy	4
Kindergarten and Preschool Curriculum	5
Grade School Curriculum	5
The Main Lesson	5
Curriculum beyond the Main Lesson (Subject Classes)	6
School Supplies & Activities	7
Clothing	7
Toys	7
Media Policy	8
Media Policy Goals	8
Media Support Plan	9
What is the Role of Religion in the Waldorf School?	10
Communication with Teachers and Administration	11
Important Dates	11
Parent Teacher Interviews	11
Parent Education Evenings	11
Health and Wellness	12
Sleep and Bedtime	12
Attendance	12
Conjunctivitis/Pink Eye	13
Head Lice	13
Communicable Disease Prevention	13
Pick Up & Drop Off	13
After-School Parent Supervision	14

<u>Cell Phone Policy</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>Smoking & Vaping</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>Animals</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>Class Outings/Field Trips</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>Criminal Record Checks for Parents</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>Carpooling</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Food</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>Preschool and Kindergarten Snack and Lunch</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>Grades Snack and Lunch</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Birthdays</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Party Invitations</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Discipline and Anti-Bully Policy</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Squamish Waldorf School Rules</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>Visitor Policy</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>Adult Conduct on School Property or School Functions</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>Parent Concerns/Issues Management Procedure</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>School Ombudsman</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>Role of the Ombudsman</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>Making a complaint to the Ombudsman</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>Powers of the Ombudsman</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>Ombudsman investigation procedures</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>Ombudsman Confidentiality</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>Parent Involvement</u>	<u>22</u>
<u>What can I do?</u>	<u>22</u>
<u>Strategic Planning</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>Fundraising</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>Getting Involved</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>Festivals</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>Volunteer Committees</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>Governance</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>Donations</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>Grants</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>Withdrawal Policy</u>	<u>25</u>
<u>SWS 2018 Strategic Plan</u>	<u>26</u>

“The need for imagination, a sense of truth, and a feeling of responsibility: these are the three forces that are the very nerve of education.”

– Rudolf Steiner, founder of Waldorf education

Dear Parents,

Welcome to Squamish Waldorf School. The purpose of this handbook is to help you find your way into the life of our school and its community. A Waldorf school differs from other educational institutions in many ways; parent involvement and understanding of our objectives are important to our success.

The participation of all parents is important, not simply because we are a non-profit endeavour, but because we are building a community and demonstrating this community-building spirit for our children. We hope that this information will clarify school policy, provide information about Waldorf education and help enrich your life and the life of your family.

School Contact Information

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“The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science.”

— Albert Einstein

Introduction

The Waldorf school movement is the largest independent school movement in the world. There are over 1,000 schools in more than 60 countries worldwide and over 2,000 early childhood programs across five continents.

Waldorf education, founded in 1919 by Austrian philosopher and educator Rudolf Steiner, supports a harmonious development of thinking, feeling, and willing. Imagination and creativity are cultivated, along with cognitive growth. The physical and emotional phases of childhood development are taken into account.

Waldorf schools strive to awaken and enable capacities, rather than to merely impose intellectual content on the child. Learning becomes an engaging voyage of discovery, both of the world and of oneself. The curriculum is carefully designed to ensure that the academic and artistic lessons are appropriate to each child's stage of development.

Rudolf Steiner's worldview based on his insights into human nature and human destiny is called Anthroposophy or Spiritual Science, which recognizes the human being as a spiritual being. This understanding is central to our pedagogy and to our view of the developing child. It is the foundation of the Waldorf school curriculum. Through Anthroposophy, Steiner also brought ideas that have inspired new methods in economics, medicine, agriculture, architecture, religion, sciences and the arts.

Pedagogy

A central aim of Waldorf education is to develop and integrate the faculties of thinking, feeling, and doing in the child, foundations for initiative and moral strength in adult life. The child is seen to have physical, emotional, and spiritual needs as well as intellectual ones, and the teaching and curriculum together seek to nourish all these aspects.

The child's development grows from an early sense of wonder to intellectual awakening and a thirst for knowledge. As the child moves from kindergarten through to elementary years the curriculum is designed to present each subject at an appropriate time to best awaken the child's faculties. The teacher, out of their own initiative, shapes the subject matter to suit the experience, abilities, and individual qualities of their particular class. Whatever the subject, the art of teaching gives it life.

The daily life of a Waldorf school is characterized in subsequent sections. Out of these characteristics come guidelines that are intended to help parents participate in the education of their children and support the teachers in their work.

If at any time you have concerns regarding your child, please contact the teacher, and if needed arrange to discuss your questions. It is a great help to us to know of any changes, such as moving house, taking place in your family situation.

“The child who lives in an atmosphere of love and warmth and who has around him really good examples for his imitation is living in his right elements.” – Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child*

Kindergarten and Preschool Curriculum

Waldorf recognizes the importance of mutual home/school support and would like to share with you some ideas regarding influences in a child's life in which this support may be especially significant. Please feel free to connect with your teacher if you have any questions or concerns.

Young children are open to every impression in their environment. Imitation is what we call their capacity to live deeply into all that surrounds them. It is through imitation that young children learn, and we strive to provide an environment worthy of imitation, where they can play imaginatively and creatively. We give children natural materials so that their imaginations are awakened when using them. This exercising of healthy fantasy in the early years is important for creativity and imagination in the intellectual life in later years.

We ask parents for their support in helping to foster the wonderful fantasy and creativity of the young child. We ask for protection from television, mobile phones, movies, videos, computers, tapes, CDs, electronic games and all the intrusions of the modern world, which invade the realm of childhood. Even newspapers and magazines often contain images that are not appropriate for children.

Just as the child lives in a rhythmical life of waking and sleeping, we also work with a regular rhythm for our daily and weekly activities: music and verse, accompanied by movement and gesture, stories, practical activities of gardening, cooking, sewing; and artistic activities of drawing, watercolour painting. Rhythm allows the children to expand out into the world through play and then to come together in a more focused activity such as the morning circle or story time. Rhythm brings a feeling of well-being and joy, a balance between playing out of their own initiative and working together in other activities. The daily and weekly rhythm fits into the wider rhythm of the year with its changing seasons and their festivals.

The children feel secure when their daily rhythm follows a regular routine. Regular bedtimes, meal times, rest times and play times give the children security and help to avoid discipline problems. This rhythm and routine is a secret key to working with our very active small children who live in such a different stage of consciousness than adults. They are not yet ready for reasoning, choices, questions and decision-making; all of which will come later. Rhythm and repetition are keys to working with this age. An example of this is how the children love to hear the same songs, and stories over and over again.

Parents of children in the Waldorf school find themselves supported by a community of families who share and explore the joys, challenges and experiences of bringing up children today. We encourage you to find out what Waldorf ideas have meant for other families in our community.

Grade School Curriculum

When the children leave the kindergarten and move into the grade school, they carry with them a reverent and loving experience of nature and humanity. In Grades 1 through 8 the content of the curriculum builds on what has gone before and addresses the inner changes that the children are experiencing. The children in each class form a community and travel the journey from childhood into adolescence together with their class teacher.

The Main Lesson

The Main Lesson is the heart of the school day for every child from Grade 1 onward. It lasts for 1hr 50mins, from the beginning of school to morning recess. For 3-4 weeks, the teacher takes the class into a concentrated exploration of one subject. This concentration allows the student to become deeply involved with a subject, to feel at home in it, and even to identify with it. It enables the student

to securely know the answer to the question, “What are you studying in school?”

Throughout each year, there are about 7 to 10 Main Lesson subjects which provide the major themes and a kind of identity for the school year. Waldorf teachers rarely use textbooks in the classroom in the early grades. They learn the subject matter and put the content they wish to impart into story or imaginative form. Children enjoy and absorb stories. When they retell them the next day, the teacher can extend or elaborate, highlight, question, explain, probe or plumb the children's understanding. The children take ownership of their learning by creating their own Main Lesson books, writing out the subject matter and illustrating it with their own drawings.

The following is a broad outline of the main lesson work done in Grades 1 through 8.

Grade 1 - Fairy tales, folk tales and nature stories; pictorial and phonetic introduction to letters; form drawing; reading approached through writing; qualities of numbers; introduction to the four processes in arithmetic; lower multiplication tables.

Grade 2 - Legends, stories of the Saints, animal fables, and nature lore; writing and reading; arithmetic including multiplication tables; retelling of stories through composition writing.

Grade 3 - Hebrew stories as introduction to history studies; reading, spelling, original composition writing; introduction to elements of grammar and introduction to cursive writing; higher mathematical tables; measurements; studies of occupations and practical life, including farming, housing, clothing, and nature.

Grade 4 - Norse mythology and sagas; Canadian history; First Nations' myths; spelling, reading, composition, letter writing, grammar; fractions; local geography and mapmaking; study of the animal kingdom and human's relation to animals.

Grade 5 - Ancient history and myths through Greek, Indian, Persian, and Egyptian times; Northamerican geography related to vegetation, agriculture, and economics; botany; geometry and decimals; composition, grammar and spelling.

Grade 6 - Roman and medieval history; European geography; geology and mineralogy; physics; (acoustics, electricity, magnetism, optics, and heat); composition, grammar, spelling, biographies; introduction to algebra and business math; geometric drawing with instruments; botany; astronomy; computers/digital citizenship.

Grade 7 - Voyages of discovery; the Renaissance & Reformation; world geography; physics; physiology; inorganic chemistry; composition, grammar, spelling, literature; math, computers/information literacy and keyboard skills.

Grade 8 - Literature (short story, letters, and dramatic contrast in Shakespearean drama); 16th and 17th century; industrial revolutions and human rights; algebra, geometry; world economic geography; physics, organic chemistry and antonym; computer skills/media literacy for positive participation.

Curriculum beyond the Main Lesson (Subject Classes)

Subject classes follow the Main Lesson. French is taught in our school as a primary foreign language. Music (singing and recorder), painting, beeswax modeling, handwork, form drawing, woodworking, and drama start in Grade 1. Violin and carving begin in Grade 4.

By the time a student reaches Grade 8, they have lived with many noble images, many fallen heroes and many searching questions about the nature of humankind and our universe.

Each historic epoch offers a significant contribution to the journey of humanity from ancient times to the unknown future. Neither anthroposophy nor religion is taught as subject content in our school.

They are the foundation under the building that supports and defines our structure.

We seek to educate our students in love and immerse them in the world of great literature, art and science. We wish to send them forth into the world with the freedom to explore and discover their own beliefs and destinies.

School Supplies & Activities

The Squamish Waldorf School will provide crayons, pencils, pens, drawing and painting paper, paints, fabric, felt, silk, needles and thread, glue, yarn, wool, fleece, wood, cardboard, and other craft supplies. In addition to the above list, grades students will also be provided with workbooks, erasers, rulers and handwork material. Parents are responsible for the cost of musical instruments and extra ordinary activities (field trips and in school workshops, etc.). [Supply and activity fees can be viewed here.](#)

Clothing

Warmth is of greatest importance to the healthy development of the young child. The children need warm clothing with waterproof boots and coats as they play outside year-round in all weather. They love splashing through puddles and digging in the ground. Their legs should be covered, and extra pants should be kept at school. They need warm hats and gloves for the winter. Indoor slippers or inside shoes that children can manage themselves can be left at school. All clothes and shoes should be marked clearly with the child's name. For the younger children (Preschool to Kindergarten) a change of clothes is needed and can be kept in a cloth bag at school.

We also ask that clothing with advertising, TV/movie characters, and cartoon pictures not be worn to school. The image on the clothing draws on the children's attention and affects the way in which they play. As such, if children come to school with clothing containing logos, they may be asked to turn the garment inside out, or asked to wear an alternative item of clothing. Clothing should be practical, simple, modest, and as plain as possible - in solid colours or tasteful prints. Tank tops are acceptable in hot weather, but please no spaghetti straps or camisoles without a cover-up.

Toys

What is a toy? Is it something to take up the slack of a boring and lonely afternoon? Something that keeps the child busy and out of the way? Something to have fun with? Something to fan the spark of creative play? What are we looking for when we choose a toy for our child? Are we choosing it with the child in mind, or is it the child in our grown-up bodies with adult consciousness choosing?

For each of us at one time or another, all of the above have been true. When we consider how much time our children spend with their toys, how much more important it becomes for us to make conscious choices about what we give them. Do we not all carry with us the fond memories of toys we loved and cherished when we were young? What memories are we offering our children through their toys, with all of our best intentions?

How many toys should we give our children? This has become a real question in the world in which we live in today. Do we follow the dictum of "the more the merrier?" In this question, we may be reminded of those excellent family cooks who always became their most creative and joyful in the kitchen, not when the pantry was stocked from top to bottom, but when the rest of their family had already despaired that any meal could possibly come together from such scanty reserves.

This raises the question: what stirs creativity the most, fullness or vacuum? A doll with perfect features

is certainly a pleasure to look at. But if it is perfectly finished, is there much left for the child to play with? A doll with only the hint of eyes, nose, and mouth is an unwritten book of expression for the young child.

Present children with potential, and they will fill it out of their own unlimited fountain of creativity. Present them with finished products, regardless of how beautiful, and we will have unwittingly limited their own resourcefulness. This is one of the maxims of Waldorf education: give children only enough to stir their own creative processes, and give them guidance in expressing what the lessons have awakened.

This fosters true creative activity in the soul-life of the child and leads to imaginative thinking in the adolescent.

Media Policy

For the purposes of this policy, media is considered to include all screens (televisions, computers, tablets, video and electronic games, smart phones), radios and music players – while music itself is not “media,” parental discretion is expected in terms of *content and appropriateness*.

[Please click here for the SWS Media Policy](#)

Waldorf schools are dedicated to nurturing the child’s capacities for imagination, healthy emotional development, independent thinking and positive action.

In recognizing the harmful effects that media have on the development of these capacities, SWS is committed to supporting the development and maintenance of media-reduced, age-appropriate environments for the children that attend our school.

Underlying this commitment is a firm belief that electronic media affects child development regardless of the content. The passive condition and the electronic stimulation of these activities cannot be reconciled with the rhythms of nature. Electronic media lacks the human presence which is so vital to the nourishment of the child, replacing it with electro-magnetic forces that inhibit healthy sleeping and eating patterns. A child’s need for creative play and his/her ability to create images from within is suppressed by the mechanically produced imagery of the television or computer screen.

Experience at SWS (and other Waldorf schools) shows that individuals who are shielded from media at home are more likely to experience, and contribute to, positive learning and social interactions. Media exposure can also be indirect, such as overhearing an adult conversation about a news story, or conversations between other children about a popular video game or movie. Younger children learn through imitation and are naturally more receptive to the influences around them, and must be shielded where they cannot protect themselves.

Media Policy Goals

Based on this commitment to healthy experiences, it is the goal of SWS that all children, from parent and child classes through age 9, be media-free.

It is also the goal of SWS that all children aged 10 and older are appropriately limited in their exposure to media including television, videos, movies or other electronic media such as games, computers, internet, cell phones, social media and emails during the school week. Appropriate limits include the

adult's responsibility to monitor content, restricting scenes of explicit violence, sexualized or adult content, and genres that may overstimulate the nervous system or impact sleep patterns, such as horror. It may be beneficial to watch along with your adolescent or pre-teen child to enjoy the experience as a family, and see how the content impacts them. See the accompanying table for details in the [Media Policy](#).

SWS fully recognizes that the challenge presented in the course of achieving these goals may be substantial and that it may vary significantly from family to family. The school also recognizes that achieving these goals in a satisfactory way will require an ongoing commitment of time and energy, both on the part of the school and on the part of the parents.

Media Support Plan

Every effort will be made to assist families in working towards fulfilling the goals of the Media Policy, so that everyone can benefit from the gifts that a healthy Waldorf classroom atmosphere provides. Creating and keeping mutual agreements that directly support these goals is a necessity.

Support initiatives include:

- Teachers will speak with each family as part of the annual November Parent Teacher Interview to renew the family's commitment to the policy and provide support if necessary.
- Discussions will be held in class meetings once a year to discuss the progress of the class as a whole and offer support and resources appropriate to the age of the class.
- The school will maintain a bibliography of information sources on the effects of media and creating healthy environments, including articles to photocopy, links, and a parent lending library.
- The school will hold Parent Education Evenings periodically throughout the school year. All are beneficial, and there is one specifically about the effects of media on the child.
- Feel free to talk to your child's teacher about media in your household. The teacher may also contact you if they notice that media may be influencing your child's school experience.

The school can and will commit to working to a point of agreement with parents on development and management strategies around limiting media in the home, however it is up to the parent(s) to keep the agreement. Ultimately, this is where the responsibility for determining a healthy environment for each child rests.

Parents are informed of the school's [Media Policy](#) at registration and are required to make a commitment to working towards its goals. If a child's media exposure is having a detrimental effect on the classroom experience, a meeting will be scheduled with the family, the child's teacher and, if appropriate, the principal, to determine the source of the exposure and explain its effects. A trial period of no longer than six weeks will be set outlining specific goals determined at that meeting. If, after this period, agreed goals are not being met, it may be considered grounds for suspension and/or expulsion.

Reading List - Media, Screen time, and Effects on the Developing Brain

- ☐ *Hold Onto Your Kids*, Dr. Gordon Neufeld and Dr. Gabor Mate
- ☐ *Simplicity Parenting, and The Soul of Discipline*, Kim John Payne
- ☐ *The Plug-In Drug*, Marie Winn
- ☐ *Unplugging the Plug-In Drug*, Marie Winn

- ☐ *Who's Bringing Them Up?* Martin Large
- ☐ *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, Jerry Mander
- ☐ *The Disappearance of Childhood*, Neil Postman
- ☐ *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman
- ☐ *Miseducation*, David Elkind
- ☐ *The Hurried Child*, David Elkind
- ☐ *Endangered Minds: Why Our Children Can't Think*, Dr. Jane M. Healy
- ☐ *Your Child's Growing Mind*, Dr. Jane M. Healy
- ☐ *The Future Does Not Compute*, Dr. Jane M. Healy
- ☐ *Evolution's End*, Joseph C. Pearce
- ☐ *The Gilt of Good Hand*, Wendell Berry

What is the Role of Religion in the Waldorf School?

The following was printed in the Marin Waldorf School Parent Handbook by Karen Rivers and describes our approach at the Squamish Waldorf School.

The word religion is derived from the Latin word “religio” which means to re-unite. It is an expression of the universal human quest for meaning, for our source and our destiny. Throughout human history, people from all cultures have asked, “Who am I?” — “What am I doing here?” — “What does it mean to be human?”

Throughout the world we share questions about creation, good and evil, and what exists beyond the starry cosmos and unknown dark matter. These soul questions live deeply within all humanity. Through different periods of history, great men and women have shed light on these universal questions. They have offered their wisdom to help each individual answer them, to reunite with the cosmic origin and the oneness of all existence.

In our school, we seek to imbue all our lessons with questions of universal implication. We seek to explore mythology, literature, history, science, and art in a way that evokes discussions or pondering about these universal questions. We wish our students to live in an atmosphere that is permeated with (not devoid of) the quest for self-knowledge, and for the exploration of life's deepest mysteries.

How is this done? Do we teach religion? The Waldorf curriculum is designed to create the appropriate relationship between a child and these immense questions. Through art, a child builds a relationship with beauty, and in studying science, one seeks an understanding of truth. Out of beauty and truth develop a sense of morality and reverence for life, which leads to profound questions of existence.

Through the study of history our students journey through ancient civilizations, studying Hebrew stories, Norse mythology, Ancient India, Persia, Sumeria, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. They enter the Middle Ages and the Renaissance with burning questions of morality which grow out of their earlier exploration.

In Waldorf schools throughout the world, we aim to celebrate the cycles of life, to address the essence of these questions as they speak to us through nature in the rhythm of the year and the festivals that have evolved through time. We all long to feel the joy and meaning of life through the recognition and celebration of cornerstone events. The seasons mark the turning points of the year, and each season has festivals around the world that express the inner wisdom of the season's nature. Because we live in a primarily Judeo-Christian culture, we emphasize those festivals at our school. Waldorf schools in Israel feature Jewish festivals; Waldorf schools in Japan feature Buddhist festivals; in India, Hindu festivals are celebrated.

We receive many questions as to whether or not we are a Christian school. We are a school seeking

to reunite children with the universal knowledge of self through the study of art and science. We celebrate Christian festivals as well as others. Underlying all of this, Waldorf schools are founded on the philosophy of anthroposophy, the wisdom of humanity. Anthroposophy, offered to us by Rudolf Steiner, explores the evolution of human consciousness. Each historic epoch offers a significant contribution to the journey of humanity from ancient times to the unknown future. Each prophet carried a message for his time, and we seek to understand our age through the looking glass of the past. Neither anthroposophy nor religion is taught in our school; they are the foundation that supports and defines the structure.

We seek to educate our students in love and immerse them in the world of great literature, art and science. We strive to awaken within them the longing to “know thyself.” We wish to send them forth into the world with the freedom to explore and discover their own beliefs and destinies in the service of humankind. On this journey, each one finds meaning, joy and reverence for life, creating a new union with her/his spiritual essence.

Communication with Teachers and Administration

We produce a weekly e-newsletter called the Sprig which contains important dates to remember and information about up-and-coming events, field trips, fundraisers, class updates, and why we do things “the Waldorf way”. It also includes feature articles that are both informative and inspiring as well as beautiful photographs of student and teacher work, festivals and events. We have a “Community” section, where community members can place their notices so that we can keep you informed of events/workshops, etc. happening in the local community. Parents are also welcome to submit appropriate announcements for our community notices section (please send any requests for submission to info@squamishwaldorf.com).

Sometimes the Sprig emails accidentally go into “junk mail” and you may have to change your settings in order to receive them. Please speak to the office staff if you are not receiving them and they will be happy to help.

Important Dates

[Please click here to view the SWS calendar for the school year](#) which includes the dates for Parent Teacher Interviews, festivals, events and school holidays.

Parent Teacher Interviews

- Preschool - Parent Teacher Interviews are held in November of each school year.
- Kindergarten & Grades - Parent Teacher Interviews are held in November and March of each school year.

[Parent Education Evenings](#)

A number of parent education evenings will be scheduled throughout the year. The topics being discussed may include: discipline, bullying, learning processes at different stages of development; the significance of rhythm in a child's day; the importance of play; the child's 12 senses; and childhood in the modern world. Parents are welcome to bring their insights and ask questions about the changes their child may be undergoing. These meetings are important. To miss them is to miss a vital link in the understanding of your child's education and stage of development, and a chance to build positive relationships with the parents of the other children in the class. For the child, her or his parent's participation is a sign of their involvement and support. Study groups are also offered and provide a further opportunity to discuss child development.

If you need to speak to your child's teacher about a particular issue or concern, it is best to set up a

time outside school hours to do this, as teachers are busy with supervision at drop off and pick up times. Please call the office to make arrangements, or reach out to the teacher directly via email.

Health and Wellness

Sleep and Bedtime

Waldorf education also works with the sleep life of the child. Every child needs a full night's sleep to nourish the inner life and to deepen and assimilate the day's experience at school. What the child takes into sleep is of great importance and preparation, for sleep is an essential part of your child's daily rhythm. Bedtime might include a rich story, a strengthening verse, or a quiet song. For older children bedtime is a great time for connection and often they will open up about their day and share their feelings and thoughts. It is helpful to allow space for this.

Attendance

A child who has not slept well or who is not feeling well needs to be at home. If your child is going to be absent, please contact the school by phone (if necessary, leave a message) or send an email to info@squamishwaldorf.com and "cc" the class teacher, explaining that your child will not be attending and why.

Regular attendance is essential to success in school particularly in the grades; however, if your child is sick, especially with contagious diseases such as flu, or a bad cough, please keep him/her home until the illness is no longer in the contagious stage. If your child is diagnosed with any contagious illness (such as chicken pox, impetigo, hand, foot and mouth disease, etc.), please notify the office. The parent body will be informed if contagious diseases are present within the school population and resources will be identified for the parents.

Children who have experienced high fevers, vomiting, or diarrhea cannot return to school until 24 hours after the symptoms have subsided. Children developing fevers at school will be sent home. At a temperature of 37.8 C or 100 F (37 C or 98.6 F is normal) the child's parents will be phoned and an immediate pick-up will be requested. At a temperature of 39.4 C or 103 F, if a parent is not available, medical intervention is required and will be initiated i.e. clinic, emergency room.

Where an injury requires hospital attention, we seek to inform the parents immediately but if parents cannot be reached, we will notify the emergency contact and accompany the child to the hospital. It is important that parents keep the school up-to-date with their daytime contact numbers and pertinent details of their children's health, including current physician, medical numbers, and any allergies.

Prescribed medication will only be given with direction from the parent, doctor's orders and if all appropriate documentation is completed. If your child needs medication during the school day please make arrangements for this to be completed by the school administrator prior to the first school day. Any non-prescription medication will only be administered with the written consent of the parent and at the discretion of the teacher.

A child's general medical care is the responsibility of the child's parents. Although there are dental and hearing screening tests done in the kindergarten, all other health services must be obtained through the Squamish Health Unit at 604-892-2293. Unvaccinated preschool children are required (by Vancouver Coastal Health licensing) to have a note on their file reflecting their status. If one of the diseases is present in the student body, the unvaccinated child is required by law to stay home as long as the disease is present. This does not apply to chickenpox.

Teachers and staff are required to report any unexplained injury to a child. Please inform the teacher of any notable accident or injury that your child has sustained. Parents should also inform the class

teacher of any changes in home life that may affect a child's behaviour – parent's absences, serious illness in the family, stress or other issues.

Conjunctivitis/Pink Eye

Conjunctivitis, also known commonly as Pink Eye, is a *symptom* of an infection and not a microbe itself. Conjunctivitis can be viral or bacterial. It is very contagious, especially in young children who are still developing their personal hygiene skills; however, it is not considered a health threat. In the case of viral conjunctivitis, the infection should clear up by itself within 10 days and treatment of symptoms such as compresses, plus good hand washing, is advised. For bacterial conjunctivitis, a topical antibiotic is often prescribed (drops or ointment). Children who have conjunctivitis should see a doctor to determine the cause of the infection. If they are prescribed antibiotics, they are allowed to return to school 24 hours after the start of treatment.

Head Lice

Head lice have no respect for age, education, or economic situation. If you discover head lice on your child, please notify the teacher or the office immediately. Conversely, if head lice are discovered in your child's class, you will be notified in a timely fashion. The school's policy follows the direction of the Squamish Health Unit. [Please visit HealthLink BC](#) or call the Squamish Health Unit (604-892-2293) for more information if needed.

Communicable Disease Prevention

Our approach to preventing communicable disease shifts with public health orders and science. [Please visit our Communicable Disease Prevention](#) page on the SWS website to view our current plan and policies around this.

Pick Up & Drop Off

Please try to organize your home and your family to see that your child is punctual. Young children learn by imitating adults and it is essential for good habits to be developed early. We, as adults, strive to be consistently punctual. When our children learn to be reliable and responsible about time from their adult examples, their will is strengthened. Each program has a grace period for starting the day - please see below for the arrival times for each program:

- Preschool: 9:00 - 9:30 am (Huckleberry & Sunflower); 8:30 - 9:00 am (Rainbow)
- Kindergarten: 9:00 - 9:20 am
- Grades: 8:30 - 8:45 am

When picking up your children please ensure the car engine is turned off, as the exhaust is unpleasant and unhealthy for others in the pick-up area. Pick up times are as follows:

- Preschool - Full Day: (Huckleberry & Sunflower)
 - 2:30 - 3:00 pm, Mon-Thu
 - 1:15 pm, Fri
- Preschool - Short Day:
 - 1:15 pm, Mon-Fri (Huckleberry & Sunflower)
 - 12:15 - 12:45 pm, Thu-Fri (Rainbow)
- Kindergarten: Full Day: 3:00 pm | Short Day: 12:45 pm
- Grades: 3:00 pm

Please notify the office and/or class teacher ahead of time if someone other than an authorized person is picking up your child. If an unauthorized person arrives without prior arrangement, the child will remain under the supervision of the staff. The teacher may allow verbal permission via the telephone from the family as long as the parent/guardian confirms information about the person and the pick-up person verifies their information.

Parents are expected to pick up their children punctually at the end of the school day. If there is an emergency or an unusual circumstance whereby the child needs to leave school early, the parent is expected to call the school with details, expected time of arrival and a call back number if there is one. If the parent is going to be later than 15 minutes after dismissal time, the parent is expected to make arrangements for someone else to pick up their child. If there has been no phone call and no one has picked up the child by 15 minutes past pick-up time, the teacher will make calls to the parents followed by their emergency contact numbers until someone is reached. This person will be requested to pick up the child immediately.

It is the staff's legal responsibility as far as possible not to release a child to anyone who is judged unable to adequately care for the child; for example, if mental or physical capacities are impaired due to the influence of medication, drugs, or alcohol. If a teacher believes that a child will be at risk, they will call a relative or friend from the authorized pick-up list.

After-School Parent Supervision

We care for your child's safety during and after school hours. Please see below for some important reminders about adult supervision after school hours to ensure that children are kept safe.

Playground Use

The playground is used by school children until 3 p.m. and not accessible for use until after this time. Parents/guardians are responsible for the supervision of their child(ren) once they have picked them up. If parents/guardians are picking up other children, they are also the parent/guardian's responsibility.

Playground Rules

The rules that we have at recess/outdoor time must be carried by the parents after school hours. They are as follows:

- Respectful behaviour at all times
 - Treating and respecting self, others and the school with dignity and consideration
 - If a child tells another child to stop, it needs to be enacted right away
 - Respect the building
 - Respect others' property

Unsafe / Inappropriate Behaviour

We ask that you promptly attend to any of the following:

- Loud yelling or screaming

- Hitting or pushing
- Rough play
- Climbing on top or overall fences and railings of the play structure
- Climbing on the grass roof of the small wooden house
- Running with sticks
- Stepping into the garden beds
- Running or screaming inside the school if coming into the washroom (please use the downstairs bathroom, not upstairs)
- Throwing wood chips, rocks, or any other objects
- Climbing trees
- Preschool-aged children playing on the large play structure

Parking Lot: Out-of-Bounds

Please do not let your child play or bike around in the parking lot.

Cell Phone Policy

Squamish Waldorf School makes a concerted effort to reduce the amount of WiFi/electromagnetic frequencies/EMF radiation in and around the school. To this end, we disconnect WiFi during school hours.

We ask that parents and visitors be cognizant of how and when they use their mobile devices on school property and that this be restricted to the parking lot, in or near your vehicle preferably. Once you come to the front door (or the school-side of the ball fence) please refrain from using your phone for calls or texts.

There are two reasons for this: We are concerned about the impacts on children of seeing their parents and caregivers constantly connected to their mobile devices. We want children to have a sense of priority when they are being picked up and dropped off at school. The other reason is that WiFi has potential serious health impacts, particularly on young developing brains as children's skulls are not fully formed or as hardened as an adult's.

May 31, 2011| The World Health Organization/International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classified cell phone radiation as a possible carcinogenic, putting mobiles in the same risk category as lead, the pesticide DDT, engine exhaust, and chloroform. This research is based on an increased risk for glioma, a malignant type of brain cancer, associated with wireless phone use. The agency categorized cell phone radio frequency electromagnetic fields (EMF) as Category 2B – POSSIBLY CARCINOGENIC TO HUMANS.

If you are interested in doing your own research there is a great deal of information available on the Internet that supports this concern and we feel that erring on the side of caution is best in this situation.

Smoking & Vaping

There is no smoking or vaping permitted on preschool/school premises, which includes the outdoor

play area, pick-up/drop-off zone.

Animals

No pets are to be on school property. Should you need to tie up your dog, please do so at the entrance of the parking lot on the grass and manage your pet's safety and volume. Please do not leave dogs tied up if they are a hazard to others or an audible nuisance.

Class Outings/Field Trips

A Permission Slip signed by the parent is required for each child before he/she may participate in an outing.

Criminal Record Checks for Parent Volunteers

Parents are required to have criminal record checks complete before volunteering for school outings with children. This includes driving for field trips. The web process is simple and confidential.

Go to: justice.gov.bc.ca/eCRC/

Access code: GS2LSWZVRL

Carpooling

Sharing rides to and from school is essential for many families and can also develop social connection and friendships. It is important, once a routine is established, that it remains as consistent as possible. Your child should know who will be taking him/her home each day.

If children are certain of car-pooling arrangements and are picked up promptly at the agreed time, their sense of well-being, security and trust is nurtured.

Parents who carpool or volunteer to drive for class outings must adhere to the following conditions:

- Posses a legal and current driver's license
- Carry sufficient liability insurance on their vehicle
- Ensure that the vehicle being used has the proper child seat(s), if necessary
- Actively take responsibility to pass along messages and/or daily updates to their carpool partners

Food

We encourage parents to pack "zero waste" lunches using reusable containers. All lunch waste will be sent home with the children. If a child within a given class has a serious allergy, the class teacher will inform the parents and that food may be restricted from school lunches and snacks.

Snack and Lunch - Preschool & Kindergarten

In the preschool and kindergarten, we work with the children to prepare healthy (organic, whenever available) morning snacks together; usually a cooked cereal or bread or grains with fruit or vegetables and a warm drink. Play is hard work, and a loaf of bread or bowl of cereal disappears quickly. Everyone has a little, and even the fussiest eaters usually manage to leave empty plates. Snack time is a social time and, just as at home, we prepare the table together and wait until all have finished before we move on to the next activity.

Children will need to bring a healthy lunch and snack (this includes those in "short day" preschool programs). We encourage parents to pack "zero waste" lunches using reusable containers.

In the kindergarten, Wednesday is Soup Day. Please bring an offering of vegetables on Monday or Tuesday so that we can cut and make the soup together with the children. In this way, your child has a regular experience of sharing with his/her community.

Snack and Lunch - Grades

Children in the grades need a nourishing snack and a packed lunch, plus a water bottle.

Birthdays

A child's birthday is a very special day. We invite parents to celebrate it with us by preparing a birthday treat to share with the child's class. The teacher will discuss this with you in more detail as your child's birthday approaches. When preparing a birthday treat for the class, please keep the portion size small and limit the amount of sugar. Fruit kebabs are a popular treat!

The school invites parents of grade school children to participate in a birthday gifting program whereby family members purchase a small gift to the school on behalf of the birthday child such as a book for the library or a piece of athletic equipment like balls or skipping ropes, resources for class plays, materials to build stilts etc.

Party Invitations

If your child is planning a birthday party outside of school and wishes to invite all of the children in the class, you are welcome to distribute the invitations at school. However, if invitations are selective, we ask that you please distribute these away from school.

Discipline and Anti-Bully Policy

Squamish Waldorf School is committed to the personal growth of its students by providing the opportunity to develop self-discipline and positive behaviours in caring and supporting others and the environment.

Our school's approach to behavioural challenges is based on social inclusion. Challenging behaviour is an opportunity for growth. In *The Social Inclusion Approach: The Training Guide* author Kim John Payne (N.D. p.3) writes:

In contemporary times we define ourselves increasingly through social relationships. Intense social encounter becomes a new rite of passage. Therefore it becomes crucial that conflict is not avoided but challenged and that the nature of this encounter be guided with consciousness and wisdom. Conflict is not the absence of peace; it is the beginning of it.

[View our Discipline Policy here.](#)

Squamish Waldorf School Rules

1. Any student causing wilful damage to the school building/furnishings, or belongings of another person will be required to pay for the damages and contribute service time to the school
2. Toys like skateboards and scooters will not be allowed on school property unless given permission by the teacher
3. Weapons (including Swiss army knives), cellular phones, handheld devices, electronics, iPods, tablets, electronic games, trading cards, candy/chewing gum, lighters and matches must not be brought to school
4. Children should not bring money unless payment for a field trip is required
5. Children have use of a telephone in the office only in the event of an emergency or illness

Visitor Policy

Parents can visit their child's classroom provided they have the teacher's prior approval.

Children (students from other schools, friends, and relatives) are also welcome to visit the classroom for the day based on the teacher's prior approval.

Adult Conduct on School Property or School Functions

"The Squamish Waldorf School fosters harmonious relationships and honours the wonder of life."

Within our Vision there is room for differences of opinion and disagreement. It is important we treat each other with respect and are conscious of the well-being of all those affected by a given situation. If there is a conflict it is expected that the Parent Concerns/Issues Management process is followed (see further down). Behaviour that puts the students or other adults at risk – mentally, emotionally or physically – is not permitted on school property or at school functions (i.e. field trips, fundraisers, or social gatherings). Behaviour that is not tolerated may include: shouting, swearing, threats to physical safety (verbal or otherwise), intimidation, throwing objects out of anger, damaging private property and aggressive physical contact toward others.

Should a person be observed to act in a way that puts student(s) or other adult(s) at risk they will be required to meet with the principal, and board president or faculty chair. They will be reminded that such behaviour is not tolerated and a verbal warning will be given. As outlined in the Parent Concerns/Issue Management process, an additional meeting may occur to address the issues and avoid further incidents.

Should the behaviour occur again, a second meeting with the principal and board president or faculty chair will occur and may result in a written warning.

If similar behaviour occurs for the third time, a third meeting with the principal and board president or faculty chair will take place, and the person will not be permitted on school property or at school functions for a specified period of time. At any point, should a teacher, with the support of the faculty chair, principal and board president, feel the behaviour is so extreme that people's safety is at risk, the person will not be permitted on school property or at school functions for a specified period of time. This will be effective immediately.

Parent Concerns/Issues Management Procedure

If you have a concern with regard to any aspect of the school, the following steps are to be taken:

STEP 1: Direct conversation between individuals

It is always best to address concerns directly and respectfully to the person/persons involved. Sometimes it is helpful to write out points that need to be made and practice before the conversation. It is best to resolve the situation at this level.

STEP 2: Speak with a member of the Stewardship Committee / Request an assisted conversation with the Stewardship Committee

If STEP 1 (direct conversation) has not been successful or if the concern is with regard to board/school decisions, an individual or mandate group may bring their concern to a member of the Stewardship Committee.

The Stewardship Committee consists of the principal, faculty chair and an additional faculty member. Please feel free to speak to one or more of these persons with regard to your concern. The committee will then meet to review the concern. If there are any conflicts of interest within members of the Stewardship Committee, the individual(s) will step out of the process.

Possible actions/outcomes following this:

- A meeting will take place with a member of the Stewardship Committee.

The individual or mandate group receives adequate information from the Stewardship Committee member(s), and is satisfied. No further action is required and a report is given to the board and faculty (e.g. School decision is explained and understood or pedagogical questions are confirmed).

- A request is submitted to participate in an assisted conversation with the Stewardship Committee.

A Parent Concerns/Issue Management Form is completed and submitted by the individual or mandate group (available from the office upon request). A meeting will then be set up with the Stewardship Committee (see Step 3).

STEP 3: Stewardship Committee "Meeting of the Whole"

This is a formal meeting with the whole Stewardship Committee. On occasion, another person may be brought in by the committee to participate in the meeting should their presence be deemed beneficial. The committee will listen to the individual or mandate group and offer an opportunity for this party to express concerns in a non-judgmental, confidential and supportive environment. The goal is to use empathic and reflective listening skills and to offer guidance, support and clarification in the hope of directing the individual towards a self-mediation and resolution of the issue at hand.

Steps to resolve the issue are decided by the Stewardship Committee and individual or mandate group. This may facilitate a conversation between the appropriate individuals or groups of individuals. If the issue is resolved, no further action is required and the committee will submit a report to the board and faculty.

If the issue cannot be resolved, it will be brought to the board of directors. The board will seek input

from all parties concerned before coming to a decision. In some cases legal advice may be sought. The board of directors will make arbitrated decisions on the issue at hand. A decision will be reached by consensus minus one.

The principal will ensure that the evaluation of the Parent Concerns/Issues Management process takes place. The identification of reoccurring issues within the evaluation process will be directed to the board. The process beginning at Step 2 and ending with the decision at the end of Step 3 must not exceed a total of 28 days, unless there are extraordinary circumstances.

An ombudsperson is available to assist those persons who have exhausted all avenues of redress or review within their independent school or school authority to resolve a dispute.

School Ombudsman

Information from the Federation of Independent Schools Association for Person Seeking Ombudsman Services

The Office of School Ombudsman, the Associate Member Group (AMG), in cooperation with the Federation of Independent School Associations (FISA) and in consultation with the Office of the inspector of independent schools has established the position of independent school ombudsman, “the ombudsman,” to investigate complaints made by persons affected by a decision, act or omission of an independent school or school authority that is a member of this association.

Role of the Ombudsman

The ombudsman is not an arbitrator and does not have the ability to make a binding decision in a matter. The ombudsman, however, does provide an opportunity for an external review of a decision or action of a school.

The ombudsman, having completed an investigation, can make a recommendation to the school or school authority in an attempt to resolve the complaint. If the ombudsman is not satisfied with the school’s response to the written report, the ombudsman may issue a report of the circumstances to the Association and to the FISA.

Appointment of the school ombudsman for this association is a person appointed by the association and approved by the board of directors of the FISA who is qualified, through training and experience, to act as an impartial investigator of complaints.

Making a Complaint to the Ombudsman

Any person or their legal guardian affected by a decision, recommendation, act or omission of an independent school or school authority may ask the ombudsman to conduct an investigation if the complainant believes that they were treated in a manner contrary to the principles of natural justice; that the school applied a policy incorrectly or inconsistently; or that the decision or action of the school was contrary to the philosophy and mission of the school. The ombudsman cannot investigate a matter related in any way to the employment of a person by the school.

The complainant must agree at the time of making the complaint to accept the ombudsman as an unbiased party in the complaint and not to compel the ombudsman to give evidence in a court or in other proceedings of a judicial nature in respect of anything coming to the ombudsman’s knowledge in

the course of investigating of the complaint.

If the complainant does not accept the ombudsman as an unbiased person in the matter in dispute, the complainant may ask the association to designate another ombudsman for that matter.

Powers of the Ombudsman

The ombudsman has the power to investigate a complaint despite any provision in the independent school's policy or procedures that a decision, recommendation, or act is final or that no appeal lies in respect of it.

The ombudsman is not authorized to investigate a decision, recommendation, act or omission in respect to which there is a right of appeal, objection, or review until after that right has been exercised.

The ombudsman is only authorized to receive complaints related to independent schools in the association that appointed the ombudsman. (The Ombudsman appointed by the Associate Member Group is also authorized to receive complaints from independent schools or school authorities which are not members in the five associations which are members of the FISA.)

The Ombudsman may refuse to investigate or cease to investigate a complaint, if in the opinion of the ombudsman it is reasonable to do so.

The ombudsman may receive or obtain information from a person in the manner the ombudsman considers appropriate and in the ombudsman's discretion may conduct a hearing.

Ombudsman Investigation Procedures

A complaint to the ombudsman must be in writing. If the ombudsman investigates a matter, the ombudsman must notify the school affected and any other person the ombudsman considers appropriate to notify in the circumstances.

If, during an investigation, the ombudsman decides to hold a hearing, the complainant, the independent school, and any other affected persons must be given the opportunity to make representations. A person is not entitled as a right to a hearing before the ombudsman. If the ombudsman decides not to investigate or further investigate a complaint, or if at the conclusion of the investigation, decides that the complaint has not been substantiated, the ombudsman must record the decision in writing and notify both the complainant and the school as soon as is reasonable of the decision and the reasons for it. Upon completion of an investigation the ombudsman shall provide a written report to the parties involved.

The ombudsman may request the independent school or school authority to notify the ombudsman of any steps which have been taken to give effect to the recommendation or, if no steps have been or are proposed to be taken, the reasons for not following the recommendation.

If the independent school or school authority does not act on the ombudsman's recommendation within a reasonable period of time, the ombudsman shall report the ombudsman's original recommendations and the school's response, if any, to the association and to the FISA.

Ombudsman Confidentiality

The ombudsman will hold in confidence all information that comes to their knowledge in performing

their duties. If the ombudsman investigates a matter, the ombudsman must notify the independent school or school authority affected and any other person the ombudsman considers appropriate to notify in the circumstances of the name of the complainant and the nature of the complaint.

Contact: Shawn Chisholm, Executive Director
FISA (info@fisabc.ca)

4885 Saint John Paul II Way
Vancouver, BC V5Z 0G3

604-684-6023

Shawn@fisabc.ca

Parent Involvement

Why do we need parent participation? Waldorf philosophy believes child development is enhanced by a sense of community in which teachers, parents and other adults join together with the best interest of the child at heart. This joining together builds a bridge between home and school, and helps the child to feel supported.

The Parents Initiative Council (PIC) meets regularly to communicate school happenings, plan festivals, host guest speakers, and inspire volunteerism. A core group of parents lead PIC by embracing the vision of the school as they bring their creativity together to serve the school community. A parent representative from each class will be chosen to attend PIC meetings, though any interested parent can join the committee at any time or simply attend a meeting.

An active parent community supports the Squamish Waldorf School. Much of their involvement is voluntary, but there are requirements expected of parents along with enrolment in the school. A minimum commitment of 40 volunteer hours/per family/school year (an average of 4 hours/ month) is necessary to ensure the school thrives and continues to be able to offer an exceptional educational experience.

Each parent/guardian should also complete a [Volunteer Commitment Form](#), which indicates the ways in which your family can become involved. Establishing a thriving community is an important aspect of the school. Parents have a large role to play in manifesting the vision, and bringing spirit to the school. With your participation you are enriching both your own life as well as that of your children.

What can I do?

The greatest form of participation is support for your child and his or her work in the classroom. Parents are strongly encouraged to:

- Attend all parent meetings
- Read all weekly email newsletters (the Sprig)
- Attend all Parent Teacher Interviews
- Participate in class meetings
- Attend our Parent Education Evenings – all parents are invited, but new parents are required to attend
- Join committees
- Help with the fairs and festivals
- Participate in crafting bees and summer work bees

Strategic Planning

Members of the school community – be they parents, students, alumni, staff, board members or volunteers – all carry the vision for the health and the future of Squamish Waldorf School. In the spring of 2016, we created a strategic plan for 2021. This was revisited and updated in collaboration with faculty and board in the spring of 2023. A copy of the strategic plan is at the back of the handbook.

Fundraising

Tuition fees cover our basic operating costs. Our school must raise funds to provide for a variety of needs such as capital purchases (desks/tables/chairs/music equipment); program enhancements (special equipment, handwork, music and languages); teacher training; and our tuition assistance program.

We host a number of fundraising initiatives and events such as selling grocery cards at face value (the school receives up to 10% of each transaction); an organic bulk food purchasing group; plant fundraiser in the spring; as well as art auctions/raffles, and more.

The establishment of a thriving community is vital to the life and health of our school. For the school's vision to fully manifest and meet our long-term goals, the support and participation of parents is essential. Squamish Waldorf School is a non-profit organization and registered charity. Tax receipts are issued for gifts over \$10.

Getting Involved

The school holds annual festivals and fundraising events that include Christmas Fair, May Fair, a fall Lantern Walk, an Advent Celebration and a fundraising auction. Parents support these events by soliciting auction donations, inviting their friends, purchasing tickets to attend, creating hand-made crafts, donating food items, and assisting in preparations, during events and with clean-up, after.

Festivals

Throughout history, in all civilizations, there have been rituals reflecting nature's rhythms. These rituals or festivals reflect our relationship with nature and spirit, and with our life on earth. Festivals bring shared consciousness and unite community life.

The elements of festivals – light, food, song and story capture children's imagination. The ritual of the birthday party singing the birthday song, blowing out the candles and eating the special cake imparts to the children the deeper meaning of the 'birth day.' In a Waldorf school, the weekly school rhythm and the annual seasonal festivals of nature and humanity are celebrated in ways that help foster wonder, reverence and gratitude. These qualities nourish the child's capacity to be responsible to all human beings.

Teachers, parents and children work together in anticipation and celebrate the variety of festivals appropriate to the child's age and curriculum. We like to acknowledge and share other religious customs and celebrations enjoyed by our families. If you are interested in celebrating special holidays within your child's classroom, we encourage you to give suggestions to your child's teacher. Parent participation helps to make these festivals meaningful and special. Parents are welcome to keep their children home in observance of their own religious holidays.

Volunteer Committees

Several committees are now operating to help bring the school's long-term plans to realization. Parents are encouraged to contact any of the board members or their class teacher if they have experience in any of these areas and/or are interested in participating on any of these committees: Parent Initiative Council (PIC); Development (fundraising and future location) Committee; Finance Committee; and the board of directors. Knowledge and expertise in these areas are an asset but not a requirement; any contribution you can offer will be gratefully accepted.

Governance

The Squamish Waldorf School Association was established in 1999. The association is registered provincially and federally as a non-profit charitable organization. It is the legal entity which makes the school possible and which provides financial, planning, legal, business and practical support through the work of its elected board of directors and its various committees. Membership is encouraged.

Donations

Since we have charity status, all donors to the Squamish Waldorf School receive a donation receipt for tax purposes. Donations can take the form of a lump sum, higher tuition payments, redirected investment income, life insurance, bequests, family allowance, etc. As well, donations "in kind" to the school, such as building materials, tools, equipment or instruments, etc. can be assessed at an appropriate value and a tax receipt issued in that amount upon request.

Grants

We are continually researching sources of grants and funding from foundations, corporations and government agencies. If anyone is interested in participating in this process, please contact the business administrator. One of the best ways to facilitate this type of fundraising is through personal contacts, so if you have a connection with an organization locally or anywhere in the world, it can often be the key to obtaining an audience.

Withdrawal Policy

Kindergarten to Grade 8 Withdrawal

Enrolled families wishing to withdraw are required to provide at least 30 days written notice. The notice must state the reason for the withdrawal and the final date the student will be attending SWS.

A charge of 15% will be applied to the payments outlined below if 30 days written notice is not provided.

If a student is withdrawn from SWS for any reason, parents agree to pay based on the following schedule:

- A. 25% of the student's annual tuition and fees is owed if the student is withdrawn before Sept 1 (May 1 - August 30);
- B. 50% of the student's annual tuition and fees is owed if the student is withdrawn between September 1 and December 31;
- C. 75% of the student's annual tuition and fees is owed if the student is withdrawn between January 1 and March 31;
- D. 100% of the student's annual tuition and fees is owed if the student is withdrawn after April 1.

Preschool Withdrawal Policy

- Families wishing to withdraw an enrolled child are required to provide 60 days written notice (via email) including the reason for the withdrawal, and the final date the child will be attending SWS
- All withdrawals will forfeit the enrollment deposit
- All refunds will be issued one week after the child's final day of attendance

Written notice given of child's final date in Attendance	Amount of Tuition kept by the School
Less than 30 days prior	Enrolment Deposit + 2 Months Tuition
30 to 59 days prior	Enrolment Deposit + 1 Month Tuition
60 or more days prior	Enrolment Deposit

