



PARENT HANDBOOK

2024/2025

INTRODUCTION

Bower Tree Preschool is a hybrid Waldorf/Montessori preschool program for children 2 1/2 to 5 years old. The school is located in a beautiful family home in the Eliot neighborhood of northeast Portland. Our pedagogical focus is on both free play and developmentally supportive Montessori-style work. We emphasize reverence for the natural world, daily ritual, singing, storytelling, poetry, art, social-emotional development, and practical life skills. The children spend a large portion of the day outside in the fenced yard of an urban homestead, with garden beds of vegetables and herbs, a quail hutch, a rabbit enclosure, a large sycamore maple, a fig tree, an Asian pear tree, a cherry tree, and a variety of native plants including a rain garden. Our schoolyard also includes a pavilion that houses an outdoor classroom and cooking area. The aesthetic of the program is primarily inspired by Waldorf education, though the classroom design is informed by the Montessori approach with small work stations and a rotating selection of prepared activities.

Each day the children are served nutritious meals and snacks, which they are invited to help prepare. They are also invited to help care for our rabbits, quail, fish, turtle, dog, and gardens, as well as the school environment itself by means of tasks such as sweeping, dusting, sanding, mending, plant watering, and washing. The children enjoy a daily rhythm of activities including free outdoor and indoor play, watercolor painting, baking, gardening, sewing, and crafts. Each day includes a circle time, during which children take part in songs, movements, and poems that celebrate the cycles of the natural world as well as traditional folklore associated with the season. Story time is another important aspect of our daily rhythm, encouraging children to engage with seasonal themes (as well as their spiritual, emotional, and social undertones) through drama and puppetry. Both story time and meal times are held in a reverent manner, with a lit candle and a verse or song to celebrate the act of coming together to share a group experience.

Tuition includes all meals and snacks served at the school, as well as monthly recordings of the songs, poems, and stories that the children are currently immersed in, for your family's enjoyment at home. By the end of the month, the children will know all of this material by heart, with accompanying movements! Bower Tree offers a unique, artistic blend of original and traditional material including songs, poems, stories, finger plays, singing games (simple cooperative movement games accompanied by a song), poems set to music, verses for daily rituals such as candle lighting and meal blessing, and more. The content of our circles is curated, and often composed or written, for the group of children present in the school at that time. You are warmly encouraged to share your family's cultural background so that it can inform the crafting of each month's spoken language curriculum.

The children at Bower Tree are surrounded by natural materials, age-appropriate tools, simple open-ended toys, and opportunities for rich and varied sensory experience. We believe that play is the true work of childhood, and also that play and work need not be strictly differentiated. We strive to blur the line between the two, encouraging and modeling mindful, joyful engagement with the life of the home and with the world of which we are a part. During lengthy play/work periods, children are given the opportunity to move naturally among freely chosen tasks, play, art, Montessori-style lessons and activities, small group gatherings, and a weekly rhythm of activities. Throughout our time together, in the context of both work and play (as well as all other parts of our day), children are encouraged toward an awareness of themselves as part of a sacred web of interdependent relationships.

RHYTHMS

Children live in a world of rhythm: the rhythm of the breath in their bodies, the rhythm of waking and sleeping each day, the rhythm of the world around them as the seasons change. Children flourish when their lives move to a rhythm as well, and they find comfort in the routine of daily activities.

With this in mind, our program follows a daily and weekly rhythm of activities. Each school day includes its own special activity that happens during free play: chopping (meal prep) on Monday, baking on Tuesday, watercolor painting on Wednesday, and cleaning (care of the environment) on Thursday. Special attention is also given to transitioning between different parts of the day. Transitions are signaled with songs or musical phrases, and plenty of time is allowed for them so that they can proceed at a gentle, unhurried pace. Each month is differentiated by its own selection of circle songs/poems and its own story, which all tie into an overarching theme related to the rhythms of nature and traditions related to that time of year, connecting the child's daily classroom experience with the cycles of the greater world.

Daily Rhythm

8:30 – 8:40 Drop offs, greetings, hand washing, set the table, prepare breakfast, make tea

8:40 - 9:00 Morning rituals & songs, breakfast

9:00 - 9:15 Clean up breakfast table, transition to work and play time

9:15 - 10:30 Morning work and play period, morning snack, individual & group activities (indoor or outdoor)

10:30 – 10:45 Clean up

10:45- 11:00 Circle time

11:00 - 12:00 Outdoor play (may be longer or shorter depending on season)

- 12:00 - 12:30 Transition inside, handwashing, lunch
- 12:30 – 1:00 Story time and face washing / self-care / preparing for rest
- 1:00 – 2:00 Rest time
- 2:00 - 2:50 Afternoon play and work period; afternoon snack
- 2:50 - 3:00 Clean up, goodbye circle, pickups

Weekly Rhythm (group activities offered during free play/work time)

Monday: chopping day

On Monday we prepare for the week’s meals by peeling and chopping vegetables with child-safe choppers. We may also engage in another food preparation activity as a group, such as making applesauce, pickling vegetables, or soaking beans or buckwheat.

Tuesday: baking day

We make bread as a class to eat during lunch and take home to families. Occasionally we will have a special baking project on Tuesday instead of breadmaking.

Wednesday: crafting day

On Wednesday we paint or work on a seasonal craft project. Using the wet-on-wet watercolor technique and high-quality materials, children will explore one or two colors at a time to dive deep into sensory appreciation of color, water, and thick paper. Other craft projects may include working with wool, fabric, needle and thread, acrylic paint, wood, leaves, flowers, pine cones, paper, wax, or clay.

Thursday: washing day

Our activity on Thursday is cloth washing, then hanging washed items up to dry. On this day we also bring more focus to other “care of the environment” activities from Montessori such as dusting, plant care, table washing, window washing, and floor washing. Care of the environment activities are always available for individual use, but this is an opportunity to focus on them as a group and to mindfully close the week by showing care for our classroom and having a sensory experience of cleansing.

Beginning the Day

What happens during our school day is affected by how the day begins for your child. By keeping mornings as consistent as possible, you are helping your child prepare for a day of learning and activity. We ask that children not be exposed to electronic media in the morning before arrival. The morning meal will be served at about 8:45am, so please plan accordingly. And most important of all, children need to be dressed for the weather!

Morning Arrival

Drop off time is from 8:30 - 8:40 AM. Please plan to arrive on time. **If you arrive early, please refrain from knocking or coming inside until 8:30.** A teacher will typically open the door at 8:30 to welcome you inside. Once it is 8:30, you may come inside without knocking even if the teacher is a bit late in opening the door. If a late arrival is necessary (past 8:40), we appreciate your letting us know via text message (503-201-5469 unless another phone number is provided for a substitute teacher). To report an absence the day of, if earlier notification is not possible, please text the lead or substitute teacher as soon as you can to let us know that your child won't be attending.

Morning transitions can be tricky, but a warm and brief goodbye is almost always best! We will contact you if your child is having extended trouble adjusting to being at school after you leave, but usually children have adjusted after a few minutes.

Please refrain from bringing home toys to school, as they are distracting and can cause conflict. Bower Tree is not responsible for toys or other items brought from home that are then lost or damaged. Children are, however, encouraged to bring in a found natural object for show and tell!

Afternoon Departure

At pick up time, please bring home all of the belongings that came to school that day. We will do our utmost to gather all of the children's things at the front door and have everything ready to go, but it is your responsibility to take your child's belongings home and request any items that are missing. Wet or soiled clothes will be placed in a bag for laundering at home and should be replaced with clean clothes the next school day to keep in your child's cubby at school. Any borrowing clothes that your child goes home in (which will be labeled "Bower Tree" on the tag) are expected to be laundered and returned. Also make sure to check your child's mail box by the door for finished art, bread, take-home products of school activities such as sewing or spice grinding, or other school mail. Please arrive on time for pick up, and let us know via text message if you are going to be more than five minutes late. **Beginning at 10 minutes after your child's scheduled pick up time, a late fee of \$1 per minute will be charged.**

For liability reasons, it is important that you have signed your child out of school before they go to you on the sidewalk. Children who are ready to be picked up will wait on the front porch. Please approach the teacher at the bottom of the front steps to sign your child out, and then they will be invited down the steps and released into your care. When children are in the care of parents outside of the school, we ask that parents please supervise the children and ensure that they do not play in neighbors' driveways or yards. We encourage after-school socializing and love what it can do for the school community, though please keep in mind that the Bower Tree house functions as a private residence after 3:15pm. Our family kindly requests that preschool children and their parents exit the area in front of the school by that time. You are of course free to continue with after-school socializing and play at nearby locations such as Irving or Albina Park, Irvington Elementary playground, or Tiny's coffee shop across MLK.

School Meals

Food is a very important part of the Bower Tree program. We will work together each day to prepare an organic (whenever possible) and whole foods morning meal, morning snack, lunch, and afternoon snack. Morning snack will be served by the children using provided ingredients. We will follow a meal rhythm each week, according to a menu that will occasionally shift based on season, ingredient availability, and the children's response to the food. Certain things will remain consistent throughout the school year, such as eating homemade bread on Tuesdays. On a seasonal basis, you will be asked to send your child to school with an optional donation of a fruit or vegetable to supplement our meals and snacks (such as a vegetable for soup, or a fruit for fruit salad). It is

delightful for the children to prepare the ingredients they have brought to school, and to see them in the finished dish! We take time to discuss the produce that children bring, where food comes from, and how it is grown or prepared. As much as possible, we engage with that process ourselves-- by growing a small patch of wheat in the backyard, for instance, then threshing and grinding it in August. We grow herbs, salad greens, broccoli, and a few other annual vegetables. We also emphasize the value of bravely trying new foods. Alongside familiar snack staples such as crackers and apples, we offer foods that the children may not have tried before: smoked sardines, arugula, capers, starfruit, fresh herbs, different kinds of olives, and more!

Occasionally, the children will be invited to engage in a special food preparation activity such as making butter, pie, pickled vegetables, lemonade, or gingerbread.

Moderate food allergies and vegetarian diets can be accommodated, though if accommodating your child's diet raises the school's food costs significantly then you may be asked to pay a small monthly fee to help cover the difference. Since Bower Tree is located in a family home, please note that we do not maintain a kosher kitchen and we cannot change the food preparation environment to eliminate all traces of wheat, nuts, meats and dairy.

Our approach to cooking, nutrition, and food ethics is informed in part by *Nourishing Traditions* by Sally Fallon and *Full Moon Feast* by Jessica Prentice.

CLOTHING

Preschool is a place of hard work and active play. We play and work outside in all weather except the most extreme, so be sure your child is prepared to play in wind, rain, snow, and sun! Please do your best to send clothing that is:

- Appropriate for the weather (warm clothes in cold weather including hats and mittens/gloves; sun hats and light clothing in hot weather)
- Easy to move in and take off / put on
- Washable: able to withstand dirt, paint, food spills, water, etc.
- Layered for changeable weather
- Free from commercial images

We will keep at least one extra set of clothing on site for each child. We ask that the following items be **labeled with your child's name or initials** and sent with them on the first day of school to be kept in their cubby (additional pairs of underwear and pants are welcome if your child sometimes has multiple toileting accidents per day):

- Two pairs of socks
- Two pairs of underwear
- A shirt or dress
- Pants, leggings, or shorts (based on season)

If you would like your child to wear a special sunscreen or topical cream please apply it before sending your child to school that day and make arrangements with the teacher if reapplication is needed. Please also write your chosen sunscreen or topical cream on the topical cream permission form. Sunscreen will be provided and applied for all children if there will be time spent in the sun during school, as per licensing requirements. The type of sunscreen provided is listed on the topical cream permission form.

We ask that you provide rain gear for your child's use at school during the wet season, to be kept at school during that time. Please label all rain gear with your child's name or initials. Rain gear includes waterproof boots and a rain suit, or hooded raincoat plus rain pants. On chilly days, children should always arrive at school

with a warm hat and mittens/gloves, plus a scarf if needed. Weather-appropriate clothing will be a very important factor in your child's enjoyment of our program. We will have a few extra items on hand, such as mittens and hats, but not enough for everyone-- so please plan to dress your child in everything they will need to stay comfortable.

MEDIA

Our children live in a world saturated with media and commercialization. We believe that children need space and time away from the fast-paced, media-driven world. We encourage all parents to minimize their child's screen time and we ask that children not watch television or interact with a screen before they come to school in the mornings. Additionally, we ask that send your child to school with clothing and belongings that are free of commercial images. Please try to observe this dress code as much as possible, but know that children will not be shamed, forced to change clothes, or sent home if they do come to school wearing media images. We believe above all in creating an environment in which children feel safe, accepted, and loved.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Your child's health is extremely important to us. After all, we soon grow to love them too! We look forward to working with you as a team to help your little loved one thrive and grow. Of course, during this sometimes rocky adventure of life on earth, there will be times when your child is not in the best of health. As parents, you know your child better than we do and can recognize when they appear ill. Our lively day is not an appropriate environment for a sick child, and children should stay home and rest if they are not well. Please use the policy below as a reference, but defer to your own knowledge of your child if they do not meet the criteria but seem in need of extra care. If you are not sure whether or not to keep your child home we recommend erring on the side of caution to prevent the spread of illness among other families and teachers.

General Sick Policy:

Children must be symptom-free for at least 24 hours of the following before returning to care:

- Fever (temperature above 100.4)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Unusual yellow color to skin or eyes
- Pink or crusty eye(s)
- Skin or eye lesions or rash that is severe, weeping, or pus-filled
- Stiff neck and headache with one or more of the above symptoms
- Complaints of severe pain
- Head lice

If a child becomes begins exhibiting any of these symptoms during the school day, they will be separated from the other children. The lead teacher will then call the parents and request that they pick up their child from school as soon as possible. If a child residing in the Bower Tree home is ill with any of the above symptoms, they will be kept separate from the preschool children. If a teacher begins exhibiting any of these symptoms during the school day, they will separate themselves from the children and other teachers, if necessary, a substitute will be called in. If a teacher begins exhibiting or continues to exhibit any of these symptoms outside of school hours, families will be contacted and informed about any resulting changes to the caregivers on staff

for the following school day. If both teachers are exhibiting any of the above symptoms or otherwise incapacitated and no substitute is available, the school will be temporarily closed until teachers are well enough to care for children.

Food Safety

The teacher carries a current Oregon food handler's card, and all food for the children is prepared according to these safety guidelines. Substitute and assistant teachers are also required to carry this certification. Our tap water has been tested for lead by the Portland Water Bureau and was found to be safe for children to drink. The results of this lead test are included in the posting binder in the attendance desk for parents to view. Bower Tree Preschool's premises and practices are reviewed by a sanitation inspector each year as part of the license renewal process.

Physical Safety

The vast majority of injuries at preschool are minor, such as splinters, scrapes, scratches, and bruises. These minor injuries are treated with band-aids, soothing words, snuggles, ice packs, and a visit from the healing basket. The children will become familiar with the healing basket, which contains some beautiful stones to hold (a different kind for each ailment, including missing one's family), the healing feather (to gently sweep away the pain and worry), and Bongo the healing monkey, a favorite toy from my own childhood. Children are encouraged to bring the healing basket to another child who is in distress. Bower Tree also has a fully stocked first aid kit on site, for adult use, which will be brought along on neighborhood walks.

Bower Tree adheres to the safety rules published by the state for the regulation of licensed child care homes. As per licensing requirements and our wish to protect the children from harm, we eliminate hazards from the school environment as soon as they become apparent. It is important to note, however, that we differentiate between hazards and risks. A hazard, in this context, is defined as a danger that the child may not see or be aware of (such as a downed wire, broken glass, or a structure with a wobbly support) whereas a risk is defined as something that the child can see, assess, and decide whether or not to engage in (such as climbing a tree, picking up a spiny chestnut hull, walking a balance beam, or moving a log). In order to support children in learning to assess danger, and thereby decrease their chances of serious injury in the long term, children *are* allowed to take risks such as climbing and jumping and going barefoot (in warm weather)-- with reasonable safety limits imposed, such as the height to which they are allowed to climb and areas where they are not allowed to run (due to surfaces or hard corners). Children are also allowed to use age-appropriate tools with supervision, such as wavy-bladed vegetable choppers, manual drills (augurs), hammers and nails, or small saws, if the teacher feels that they can handle the tools safely. These practices are based on the teacher's experience in established, licensed Montessori and Waldorf schools as well as on her professional training. Appropriate protections such as goggles, cut gloves, or work gloves will be provided.

If your child incurs a moderate injury such as a cut, a non-emergency burn, a bruise, or a significant bump to the head, you will be notified via text during the school day, in person at pickup, or in an email after school. Moderate injuries will also be reported via an incident report form, which the parent of the child will be asked to view and sign at pickup. The school and the parents will both retain a copy of any incident report forms that are sent home. You may also be notified of mild injuries, at pickup or in an email, if the provider feels that the information would be helpful to you. In the unlikely event that a child incurs a severe injury at school, the child's parents will be notified as soon as any necessary immediate action has been taken. Both adults residing in the home carry current certification in pediatric first aid and CPR, and will apply that training when necessary. Any substitute and assistant teachers will carry the same certification. If needed, an ambulance will be called to

transport a child to Legacy Emanuel Medical Center or Providence Portland Medical Center. Severe injuries will be recorded after the fact via incident report form, once children have received care. Bower Tree Family LLC carries general liability insurance for child care, and parents are asked to sign a general liability waiver before their child's first day of school.

Emergency Procedures

In the event of a fire, earthquake, or other emergency requiring evacuation, the provider will follow the emergency plan outlined in the handout "Evacuation Plan" provided to parents at the beginning of the school year. Detailed emergency procedures are as follows:

In the event of an emergency, I will notify parents via group text message as soon as I have taken steps to ensure the children's safety.

If the school phone (503-201-5469) is not working, you may contact:

Zachary Wheeler: 971-237-4476

In the event of an earthquake, we will take the following steps:

- Direct children to "DROP, COVER, and HOLD," and remain that way until the earth stops moving, staying away from windows and furniture that may tip over. (Tall, heavy items have been secured to the wall.) We will take cover under the sturdy dining table.
- If we need to evacuate after a major earthquake:
 - o Gather children at the front door or back gate (depending on whether we are inside or outside when the earthquake occurs)
 - o Make sure that all children are present.
 - o Walk 0.4 miles to the nearest BEECN (Basic Earthquake Evacuation Communication Node), Irvington Elementary School field, at 1320 NE Brazeo.
 - o Notify parents via text message to begin the reunification of children with families.

I will stay with the children in the event of an emergency until they are reunified with their families. In the event of an evacuation, I will bring the following supplies in an emergency bag that has been prepared ahead of time:

- First aid kit
- Water bottles
- Non-perishable food
- Wet wipes
- Extra clothes

Our attendance sheet and emergency cards are located in a cabinet near the front door and will be brought with us during an emergency.

In the event of a house fire, we will take the following steps:

- If the fire requires evacuation (cannot be put out with the fire extinguisher kept in the mud room), evaluate evacuation routes.

- Gather children at the back door (or front door, depending on the location of the fire) and get emergency bag and emergency cards.
- Make sure that all children are present.
- Evacuate children into the backyard or onto the front sidewalk, depending on the location of the fire.
- Check for injury
- Call 911
- Begin reunification procedure, or if necessary due to the area around the school being unsafe, walk with the children to Irvington Elementary School field at 1320 NE Brazee to be reunified with families there.

If we need to shelter in place or lock down the facility, we will take the following steps:

- Make sure that all doors are locked
- Close curtains
- Turn off all lights
- In the case of an intruder, block door from the inside using furniture
- Get emergency bag and gather children in the nap room, sitting on the floor
- Provide books to keep the children quiet
- Call 911
- Communicate via cell phone as needed
- Keep the children together in the nap room until environment is safe

Interpersonal Safety

All providers (including assistants and substitutes) offering care at Bower Tree Preschool, as well as all adults residing in the home, are required to be enrolled in the Oregon Central Background Registry (CBR). All providers, including assistants and substitutes, will have the necessary training to work with young children, as mandated by the state. Bower Tree Preschool will ensure that individuals on the child care premises who are not enrolled in the CBR or who are only conditionally enrolled, such as visitors and temporary volunteers, will not have unsupervised access to children at any time. Visitors who are not enrolled in the CBR will remain under the direct supervision of the lead teacher when they are in the same space as the children. Visitors to the school will be required to sign in and out on the daily attendance sheet, which is visible to parents. Unscheduled visitors will not be allowed in the home, with the exception of drop-in visits from USDA monitors and licensing specialists.

The adults residing at the Bower Tree Preschool location are Caitlyn Conover Moe (provider) and Zachary Robert Boyer Wheeler (provider's husband). Both are enrolled in the CBR.

To verify that an individual is enrolled in the CBR, you may call the Office of Child Care at 1-800-556-6616.

BUSINESS DETAILS

Bower Tree Preschool is a DBA of Bower Tree Family LLC, and we are licensed by the state of Oregon as a Certified Family Child Care Home. Our license number is CF503898 and our EIN is 85-2689992. We are licensed for a maximum of 11 children at any given time (which includes any children or infants on the property, even if they are not enrolled in the program).

To register a complaint against Bower Tree Preschool regarding adherence to licensing requirements, you may call the Office of Child Care's Central Office at 1-800-556-6616. You will speak to a compliance specialist who will take your information and refer it to a local child care licensing specialist for follow-up.

COMMUNICATION

Trust is essential to the success of our program, and we believe that trust begins with open and respectful communication. Teachers will always strive to treat every child and parent with respect and understanding, and we ask for that same consideration in return. Ruffled feathers, worries, and miscommunications do sometimes happen, and we ask that parents bring any concerns to the lead teacher promptly so that they can be addressed, including anything confusing or troubling that your child may report to you about their time at school. Teachers are available to confer with you about school happenings and social dynamics, and your input as parents is valuable to us so that we can tailor our observation and education practices to best suit the needs of our students. To facilitate open communication, the Bower Tree Preschool program includes the following:

- Weekly updates** (“Teacher’s Notes”) are posted every weekend on the password-protected parent portal of the web site. The update includes a written summary of our week, a gallery of photos, and video snippets.
- Monthly recordings** of the current spoken language curriculum (songs, poems, stories, etc.) will be made available on the parent portal each month for your enjoyment at home.
- Parent-teacher conferences** are scheduled in January to take place during February (about halfway through the school year). These provide an opportunity for sharing impressions, concerns, questions, and observations of your child's development. However, you are welcome to request additional parent-teacher conversations. We welcome communication from you about your child, including information about significant changes in your child's life. Please do not hesitate to reach out via email to schedule a time for an in-person meeting or zoom/telephone conversation if the need arises.
- We rely heavily on **email communication**. If you do not have daily access to email please let us know and we will plan to communicate last-minute announcements and changes to you by phone.
- The lead or substitute teacher will use group or individual **text messages** to communicate about noteworthy events during your child’s school day, unusual drop off or pickup times, an unscheduled school closure or delayed start time, or other time-sensitive topics.
- The parent portal of the **school web site**, in addition to offerings mentioned above, contains downloadable forms and documents such as the parent handbook.

Other notes about communication:

- **Please feel free to contact the teacher via email** (caitlyn@bowertreepreschool.com) if you have a question or concern, or if you wish to arrange a time to speak on the phone or in person about your child. We are happy to accommodate private parent conversations throughout the school year, and we encourage you to schedule them.
- Please refrain from engaging the teacher in extended conversation about your child during drop off or pick up. Friendly chats are encouraged, and questions or brief updates are welcome regarding the child's day, appetite, sleep, emotions, health, etc., but longer conversations should take place at a scheduled time without the children present, both to show respect for the children and so that the discussion topic can be given full attention.
- The teacher will communicate with parents via text or phone if a child falls ill during the school day, has an unusually protracted emotional meltdown, or incurs a noteworthy injury.
- The teacher will endeavor to briefly communicate any important information about your child’s day in person at pickup

Code of Conduct Policy

Preschool children are expected not to intentionally or repeatedly harm other people, animals, or property.

Communication among parents and teachers, and toward children, is expected to be respectful at all times. Adults are asked to refrain from vulgar or negative speech at drop-off and pick-up times to preserve the sanctity of the early childhood environment. If you have a school-related concern, please email the lead teacher to voice it and request a private meeting if needed, so that we can address the issue collaboratively and give your family our full attention.

FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS

Bower Tree Preschool marks the rhythm of the year through the celebration of non-religious festivals that focus primarily on the changes of the natural world. Each season includes at least one celebration, which typically serves as the culmination of that month's circle and story. Children experience festivals as magical and find great joy in the preparation for these events. Festivals are a time for us to step out of normal everyday life and celebrate what is happening in the world around us-- and also to acknowledge the corresponding changes taking place within us.

We will celebrate three festivals together: Michaelmas (end of September), Lantern Walk (mid November), and May Day (beginning of May). These are some of the traditional festivals celebrated in Waldorf schools around the world.

General information follows about the festivals and celebrations, and more specific information about each one will be provided via the monthly newsletters as the season approaches.

Michaelmas (late September)

Michaelmas is celebrated during the harvest season, close to the autumnal equinox. As we move from the long, warm days of summer to the cool, shorter days of autumn, we begin to turn inward. The story of Michael battling and overcoming the dragon brings strength as we enter the new season. At Bower Tree Preschool, this festival is associated with the call to embark on the hero's journey, both individually and collectively: the journey to our own sacred center. We will tell our September story together (a hybrid adaptation combining the St. George / Michael story with a wonderful Swedish fairy tale) and act out the encounter with the dragon. This is a time for deeds of courage, strength, and derring-do, for empowering the angelic warrior within each of us as we bravely face-- together-- the approach of winter, our own inner monsters, and a strange and complicated world.

Lantern Walk (mid to late November)

A mid-November festival traditionally celebrated at Waldorf schools, the Lantern Walk (inspired by the European festival of Martinmas) is a celebration of hospitality, charity, shelter, and kindness toward others. At Bower Tree we tell a story about a young child with a magic lantern. The story suggests that the light of the lantern is our own inner light, which guides our way through the gathering darkness as we journey toward the heart of winter, when the days will begin to grow longer again. This is a simple, humble holiday for which children craft their own lanterns and learn lantern songs that they then sing as they carry their lit lanterns through the dark. In our own family tradition, the lantern walk is followed by a simple, candlelit meal with all other lights in the house turned off.

May Day (early May)

This is an ancient, joyous festival welcoming the arrival of spring. We dance around the may pole, singing spring songs (the circle that the children have been practicing all April) and weaving ribbons to celebrate the reawakening of the world. Major imagery for this holiday includes morning dew on grass, ribbons, and the leafy and flowering branches of trees.

Other holidays: In a more low-key way, we may also acknowledge Halloween / Dia de los Muertos, a non-religious Festival of Light in December, the cluster of pre-spring holidays in early February (including Imbolc, Candlemas, and Groundhog's Day), Valentine's Day, and the vernal equinox / Earth Day in late March or April.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Birthday celebrations are special times when we show our appreciation for your child's presence in our school, and for their existence in the world. A birthday song is sung and a birthday story is told which celebrates your child's life on Earth so far. The story is followed by a birthday snack and a special gift made by the teacher for the child.

CONFLICT & DISCIPLINE

The daily rhythm of the classroom will do a great deal to minimize conflict, as children know out of habit what is expected of them. Teachers model ways of resolving conflicts and teach children the skills and phrases they need to solve problems on their own. These techniques are designed to address social issues and build classroom harmony in the long-term, rather than stop undesirable behavioral patterns by force. However, a teacher will intervene immediately and stop an interaction if they deem it to be aggressive or harmful to a child (this includes verbal aggression). When necessary, the teacher may use a "time in"—a period of time where a child will sit with an adult and perhaps work on a grounding, calming task until the child is ready to rejoin group activities. Generally speaking, in keeping with both Montessori and Waldorf pedagogies, we understand problematic behaviors to be the child's way of communicating an unmet need or unlearned skill. Rather than resorting to punitive action, our approach is to identify and address the unmet need or unlearned skill by modifying the environment (including our own behavior), teaching the social skills needed to prevent or resolve conflict (and big emotions such as anger and anxiety), or by offering different activities or lessons based on observations of the child.

In general, the teacher will follow these steps in response to a conflict among children:

- 1) Draw closer to assess whether the children can safely resolve the conflict on their own.
- 2) Intervene immediately if a child is acting with physical aggression towards another child, using light restraint and/or picking the child up if necessary. Firmly state school safety rules ("We do not hit each other" or "I will not let you hurt your friend"). Tend to any immediate concerns, such as caring for a crying or hurt child.
- 3) Clearly and simply state what is happening ("I see that . . ." or "I'm noticing that . . ."). Comfort all parties and speak to the children about what happened / what is happening, in a way that encourages reflection, empathy, and emotional literacy. For example, we might use descriptive language to help children recognize and name emotions ("Did your heart beat faster when you were angry?" or "When we feel frustrated, sometimes we yell like that. What else can we do instead?") and encourage empathetic awareness ("How would you feel if she did that to you?" or "Do you remember when this happened to

you? How did it make you feel?") We do not force apology, but we do suggest it as a way to help mend the situation by comforting someone that you've hurt, even accidentally. Lessons such as this one may also be taught at other times in the context of grace and courtesy lessons (a social teaching technique from Montessori).

4) When equilibrium has been restored, comment on that fact. ("Well, this feels better now!" or "We mended the problem! Thank you for helping him feel better.") Then, if needed, suggest or enforce a change in the children's play, for example by separating two children who are repeatedly not respecting each other's boundaries. This is usually easily accomplished by inviting one or more of the children to join the teacher in an activity such as peeling carrots for lunch, watering plants, or helping to prepare snack. The teacher may also redirect the children to another play or work option.

5) Make a note of the conflict in order to address the needed skills through future grace and courtesy lessons, true stories, or read-aloud books.

6) Communicate with parents after school via email or during school via text if an event is noteworthy, or if behavioral patterns emerge that merit a conversation about how to better support the child/children. Incident report forms will be used for especially significant behavioral events, especially those involving harmful physical altercation.

There are certain serious behaviors that might result in parent meetings and, if necessary, a child being asked to leave the school. These behaviors include:

- Running away or repeatedly trying to run away
- Intentionally and repeatedly injuring/hurting another person or animal
- Aggressive behavior that results in injury (whether intentional or not)
- Causing repeated and intentional harm to plants or other property
- Uncontrollable disruptive behavior
- Repeated refusal of adult guidance

In the event of an incident of harmful misbehavior, teachers will contact the parents and meet to discuss how to better support the child in the classroom. The parents and teachers will work together to draft a plan that can be addressed both at home and school. Dismissal from the program due to behavioral issues will occur only in the case of circumstances that seriously compromise the well-being of the other students and/or provider, after a reasonable effort has been made to remedy the issue (see "termination procedures").

SCHEDULED CLOSURES

Bower Tree Preschool will be in session Monday through Thursday from 8:30am-3:00pm. **The program is year-round. The 2023/2024 school year will begin on Tuesday, September 5, 2023 and end on August 15, 2024.** Annual tuition (see "enrollment, fees, and tuition" section below) is divided into twelve flat monthly payments, including months with scheduled closures (below).

Scheduled Closures 2024 - 2025 (subject to revision)

Scheduled Breaks 2024 - 2025 (subject to revision)

November 28, 2024: Thanksgiving

December 23, 2024 - January 6, 2025: Winter Break

March 17-20, 2025: Spring Break

June 16-26, 2025: Summer Break

August 18-28, 2025: Autumn Preparation

Bower Tree Preschool will be closed on all federal holidays.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

Bower Tree Preschool may cancel or delay school for the day in the event of extreme weather such as freezing rain, snow, ice, or poor air quality. The same policy will be followed in the event of power outage or unsafe building conditions. The decision to close or delay will be made as early as possible so that parents can be notified promptly. In the case of poor air quality, school may be held fully indoors instead of being canceled. Bower Tree Preschool will generally follow the lead of Portland Public Schools in canceling or delaying school due to inclement weather.

ENROLLMENT, FEES, & TUITION

Required Forms (8):

- Enrollment Agreement
- Emergency Card
- Medical Information Form
- General Waiver
- Topical Cream Permission Slip
- Neighborhood Walk Permission Slip
- Parent Handbook Signature Slip
- License Certificate Review Declaration (hard copy will be provided)

Payment and Fees

Tuition is \$1,175 per month for the standard schedule of Monday through Thursday, 8:30am to 3:00pm, rising to \$1300 per month in January 2025 to accommodate cost-of-living increases. The annual tuition amount is divided into twelve flat monthly payments regardless of school closures or attendance. Monthly tuition will not be prorated. **A nonrefundable enrollment fee of \$150, and a deposit of one month's tuition, is due upon initial enrollment.** The enrollment fee is waived for returning families, though a deposit is required each year. The deposit will be applied as tuition for the child's last month (see "Termination Policy"). If the child will be

continuing in the program beyond August 2024, a new enrollment agreement for the 2024/2025 school year will be signed and a new deposit will be required at that time.

An **annual \$200 materials fee** is due on the first day of each school year.

Payment is due to the provider monthly in the form of Venmo payment or bank transfer (Venmo payment is preferred). Invoices will be sent out at least a week prior to payment due dates. **Tuition is due on the first day of each month.** If it is paid more than five days after the due date, a **\$25 late fee** will be assessed. Payments more than two weeks late may result in termination of enrollment.

Tuition includes: breakfast, lunch, morning snack, and afternoon snack; weekly updates in writing, photo, and video; monthly audio recordings of seasonal songs, poems, and stories; the option for a complementary consultation with the provider on crafting a developmentally supportive home environment; two parent-teacher conferences per year; and seasonal community festivals.

If the parent (or other authorized adult) is going to be more than ten minutes late in picking up the child, every effort must be made to contact the provider. **A late pickup fee of \$1 per minute will be charged after a ten-minute grace period.** Any late pickup fees will be added to the next month's invoice.

Termination Procedures

This contract may be terminated by the parent(s) or the provider. However, due to the destabilizing effect that unexpected changes in a small group can have on young children and their caregivers, **Bower Tree Preschool asks that families commit to a full year of school from September through the following August.** Upon enrollment for each school year, parents are required to submit a deposit equivalent to one month of tuition, to be applied as tuition for the following August. If parents choose to withdraw their child from the program any time after submitting a signed enrollment agreement and before the end of the school year indicated on the agreement, Bower Tree Preschool will require continued payment of monthly tuition for 90 days after notice of withdrawal, with the deposit covering the final month. Monthly tuition will not be prorated in the case of early departure. If a family finds that it is necessary to break their commitment and withdraw mid-year, we ask for a minimum 90-day notice so that a smooth transition can be managed.

To protect the well-being of the children, the provider will terminate this contract only when necessary for the continued safety and thriving of the school community, or in the case of non-payment of tuition. The provider may immediately terminate this contract if tuition payment is more than two weeks late, if a family has shown that they cannot or will not continue to pay tuition or abide by other important school policies, or in the case of circumstances that impact the quality of care for all children by significantly compromising the well-being of the children and/or providers. In a situation compromising the well-being of children or providers, a reasonable effort shall first be made by parents and providers to remedy the issue, unless the child's or family's continued presence in the program represents a risk of immediate harm to the other children, the providers, the provider's family members or pets, or the provider's property.

(Please detach and return this slip.)

I have read and understood the Bower Tree Preschool 2021/2022 parent handbook, and have been given an opportunity to ask any questions that arose while reading it.

Parent/Guardian's name: _____

Parent/Guardian's signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian's name: _____

Parent/Guardian's signature: _____ Date: _____