



# Parent Handbook

## 2020-2021



### Philosophy:

"Tree of Life Discovery School creates a learning environment where students are supported in becoming active seekers of knowledge to create a true lifelong love of learning. We incorporate the traditional areas of the Montessori philosophy paired with experiences in and with nature to help children begin to develop care and concern for the natural world."

### Contact:

Physical Address: 134 Rainbow Circle  
Gypsum, CO 81637

Phone: 660.528.0050

Email: [TreeOfLifeDiscovery@gmail.com](mailto:TreeOfLifeDiscovery@gmail.com)

School Hours: Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m.- 5:30 p.m.



### Enrollment and Deposits

Tree of Life Discovery School enrolls children 2 years – 6 years of age. However, sometimes special exceptions are made for children 1 year of age and left up to the discretion of the Director. A \$200 deposit is required immediately to reserve your child's spot and will be put toward your first month of tuition.

### Hours

Regular school hours are from 8:00am – 5:30 pm Monday through Friday. There will be no additional care available outside these areas, so please do not ask.

### Philosophy and Curriculum

Tree of Life Discovery School follows a Montessori inspired philosophy and a nature-based curriculum. The Director/Teacher is a trained Montessori teacher certified by the American Montessori Society. This philosophy includes training and methods for cultivating positive child/teacher relationships and creating and maintaining a socially and emotionally respectful early learning environment. In addition, teachers work to provide individualized attention for each child focusing on learning, social and emotional development. When necessary, the teacher will work to develop a specific learning or behavioral plan for a child. In addition, Tree of Life Discovery School works with Early Childhood Partners for further observation and evaluation of children when necessary. Our nature-based curriculum includes a lot of outdoor play and child led exploration of our natural world. We believe that outdoor play is extremely important in the growth and development of young children and helps our future generations cultivate a love for nature so they can help protect our natural world for the future.

### Attendance

Regular attendance is important to a child's success and the success of our program. We have 2, 3, 4, and 5 day programs available to help meet the needs of every family and we ask that you recognize the benefit of your child being in the classroom during their scheduled days.

**Tardiness** Arrival is between 8:00-8:30am at which time a teacher will be available to greet you and your child at the door and escort them into the classroom. Work time begins upon arrival so it's important for the teacher to be present in the classroom working with the children at 8:30am. Due to Covid-19 and keeping our students safe, we are restricting parent access into the



classroom at this time. If you anticipate arriving after 8:30am, please call or text to let us know when you pull up so a teacher can meet you at the door. Please be aware that arriving late can be disruptive to the learning and routine of the other children in the school. At 10:00am, per our classroom schedule attached, Little Explorer time begins, and we are often away from the school. It will be the parent's responsibility to find us and if you cannot find us, you are responsible for your child's care. If tardiness becomes an obvious pattern for your family, we will ask you to consider a program that is more suited to your family's needs.

**Absence** If your child will be absent due to illness, please call by 9am that day. For planning purposes, please communicate any planned absences with the teacher as soon as possible. If you tell the school that your child will be absent, any changes to that new schedule **have to be communicated no later than two days prior**. Please understand that there are other children enrolled in the program including the teacher's own children, so it is important to be respectful of the teacher's time and the learning of each individual child. If we realize that no outside children will be present on a particular day, we often schedule personal plans or take our homeschool learning somewhere new. Last minute changes make planning difficult and is not respectful of our time.

### **Make up days**

Tree of Life Discovery School does not offer make up days, sick days or trade days. Your child may only attend on the days he/she is enrolled.

### **Personal belongings**

Children are asked to leave all personal items like stuffed animals, money, jewelry, costumes, toys and other valuables at home. Items such as these are easily lost and are also a distraction during our classroom time. Also, because of Covid-19 personal items are limited to lunch boxes only. The school cannot be responsible for lost or damaged belongings.

### **Clothing**

**"There's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing."**

1. Children should come to school in comfortable play clothes and shoes that they can move easily in at all times. Because we are a nature school, we are outdoors playing in mud, dirt,



grass and water. We believe it is important for children to enjoy these natural areas and it is likely they will get dirty at times, so please dress your child appropriately.

2. Each child must bring two full sets of extra seasonal clothes to be kept at school. Please label all articles of clothing with your child's name. The extra clothes will be returned to parents if and when they are used. Please remember to send a new change of clothes if and when your child brings home wet or dirty clothes.
3. Weather changes quickly in Colorado and we go outside every day in ALL weather. In the winter, please make sure your child is equipped with waterproof boots, waterproof mittens, hat and snowsuit. All of these should be labeled with your child's name. If the weather becomes extremely cold or hot, the teachers will make a safety decision to stay inside.
4. **Please label all articles of clothing with your child's name.**

### Inside Shoes

Tree of Life Discovery School requires that each student keep a pair of inside shoes at school. These should be appropriately fitting shoes such as sneakers, Crocs, Natives etc. that will stay on your child's feet and limit the noise level in the classroom. **No slippers please.** Your child will change shoes upon arrival at school, for outside time and to go home. Your child should come to school in shoes appropriate for outside play that day. We love to play in the mud and rain puddles, so it is optional (and encouraged) for them to have pair of rubber boots during the rainy season to keep at school. The school is working to acquire extra pairs of such items to have on hand but it's not always possible.

### Outdoor Activities

Tree of Life Discovery School is a Montessori Inspired Nature School. This means that the outdoors are a part of our classroom. We will spend an average of 4 hours a day outside in ALL weather. There will be times when weather extremes will require children to remain inside and that will be determined by the teacher. It is vital that all children have adequate clothing to safely play outside including hat, gloves, warm layers and snow gear. Sunscreen must be provided and will be applied as needed per manufacturer. **Licensing regulations prohibit the school from using any sunscreen other than what is provided by the parent.** The school will alert parents when a child needs a refill on supplies in an appropriate amount of time. If a parent forgets to bring sunscreen in a timely



manner and the child runs out, we will not be able to appropriately protect your child from sun exposure.

### Behavior Management

The teachers work closely with each child to help develop age appropriate and respectful behavior. Tree of Life Discovery School emphasizes a peaceful classroom and expects each student to be respectful and kind to all other student, teachers and to the classroom and learning materials. Behavioral concerns will be addressed on an individual basis and will be discussed with the parents when deemed necessary. The teachers will work closely with the parents in order to develop a plan to mitigate inappropriate behavior. When necessary, the teachers will enlist the help of the consultation team from Early Childhood Partners for further observation, evaluation and intervention. Any behavior that is hurtful to another child, such as malicious hitting, kicking or biting, can be cause for suspension and/or expulsion.

### Child Abuse

Tree of Life Discovery School staff is required by law to report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse to the county Department of Social Services or the local law enforcement agency. In order to report suspicion of child abuse, please contact the Child Welfare office of Eagle County at 970.328.7720 or the local police department.

### Communication

With the advancement of technology, it can make the teachers very accessible. However, please remember that we still deserve to have some downtime with our families. Parents may contact the Director by phone or email with questions or concerns regarding your child or the school from **7:00 am – 6:30 pm Monday through Friday**. You may also schedule appointments to address more in-depth questions or concerns regarding your child or the classroom. Your child's teachers' first responsibility is the care and safety of all children. Please set an appropriate time for communication and not when the teachers are actively teaching or "on duty". Even a "quick" question can distract a teacher enough to endanger the children in their care. Therefore, entryway conferences are discouraged. These times are not adequate to give you the undivided attention to your concerns that your family deserves.

### Conferences



Parent/Teacher conferences are held throughout the school year. These conferences will address social/emotional adjustment, academic growth and goals for your child. To meet the needs of parent schedules, these conferences will be held outside of school time. You will receive an email a few weeks prior to the conference days to sign up for a conference time. Additional conferences can be scheduled individually whenever necessary or desired.

### Discipline

The Montessori Philosophy encourages “respect for myself, respect for others and respect for the environment.” We follow a peace curriculum that allows for children to resolve conflict with their peers with a teacher as a facilitator. The teacher may also need to address a child’s behavior specifically, at which time a child is asked to stay by the teacher. The behavior is then addressed with the child and the teacher. Physical punishment is never an option. Recurring discipline situation or serious “acting out” that is harmful to the child, another child or disruptive to the class environment will require an immediate conference with the parents, the teachers and the Director.

### Emergencies

Tree of Life Discovery School staff takes every precaution to ensure a safe environment. Our classroom was designed so that we can identify where children are at all times visually. We also take attendance and continually count the number of children throughout the day so that we can be sure of each child’s whereabouts. Even with these precautions there may be incidents that fall outside our control. We have procedures in place for emergencies such as fire, severe weather, evacuation and intrusion.

### Field Trips

Any time we leave the property it is considered a field trip. Therefore, we take field trips daily and all parents are given a schedule of daily activities, so they are aware of where we are at all times of the day. Each child must have a field trip permission form on file. Field trips are always within walking distance and should any special field trips occur outside of the Two Rivers Village community, an additional field trip permission form will be issued.



### Filing a Complaint

If anyone should wish to file a complaint with the Department of Human Services they may contact: The Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Childcare, 1575 Sherman Street, Denver, CO 80203-1714, 303.866-5958 or 800.799.5876.

### Hand Washing

Children's hand washing will be taught when necessary and will be supervised. Handwashing will occur before and after all meals and snacks, immediately after coming inside, after handling animals/pets, and anytime a child is seen putting fingers in their mouth or nose.

### Health and Immunizations

**Health Form** Within 30 days of enrollment, each child must have a Health Form on file. This form must indicate the child's health status and must be signed and dated both by a parent and an approved health care professional who has seen the child within the last 12 months.

**Immunizations** If a parent or guardian of a child wishes an exemption from the requirement of immunizations due to religious or personal beliefs, a written statement signed by the child's parent or guardian which states the reason for such an exemption and that the child is in good health must be submitted to the center. Tree of Life Discovery School may enroll children who are non-immunized.

### Medication

Prescription and non-prescription medication shall be dispensed by staff who has completed the Medication Administration training and has been delegated to administer medication. Medication can be dispensed ONLY with the written order of a person with prescriptive authority and with written parental consent. The required Medication Authorization form is available and must accompany any medication given to the school. The written order by the licensed prescribing practitioner must include:

- Child's name
- Licensed prescribing practitioner name, telephone number and signature
- Date authorized
- Name of medication and dosage





- Time of day medication is to be given
- Reason for medication
- Side effects or reactions to watch for
- Special instructions

Medication must be in the original container bearing the original pharmacy label with the RX number, name of medication, date filled, expiration date, physician's name, child's name and dosage instructions. **Never send medication in a child's lunch box or backpack. Please hand the medication directly to the teacher.** All medications are kept in a lock box in the kitchen and are dispensed by teachers trained in first aid and administration of medicine.

Inhalers and Epinephrine: In addition to the above requirements, inhalers and epinephrine will be stored in the office but not in the lockbox for easy access. Inhalers and epinephrine will be carried by the teacher assigned to the corresponding child for any field trips or neighborhood walks.

### **Illness/Accidents**

If a child becomes ill or injured at school, we will first notify the parents or emergency contacts. For the health and safety of the staff and other students, it is **required** that you respond immediately and so that teachers can return to their duty in the classroom. Please help us keep our environment healthy by keeping children home when they have a fever, vomiting, and discomfort. A child must be 24 hours free of those symptoms before returning to school. **Special Covid-19 restrictions may require a longer absence.** If a child is sent home sick in the middle of the school day, we expect he/she will stay home the following day.

All health problems must be noted on the child's Health Information form.

The school is required by law to keep an updated Immunization Record for every student. This must be in the child's file before the first day of school. A child may be withheld from the school until his/her health records are complete. There is no discount on tuition when a child is unable to attend for this reason.

When children have been diagnosed with a communicable illness such as hepatitis, measles, mumps, meningitis, diphtheria, rubella, salmonella, tuberculosis, Covid-19, giardia or shigella, the school must immediately notify the local health department or the Colorado Department of Public



Health and Environment, all staff members and all parents of children enrolled. Children's confidentiality must be maintained.

Parents are asked to report exposure of their child to communicable illness outside of school, and at the discretion of the Director, the child should not attend school for the period of time prescribed by the child's physician or by the local health department.

### **Inclement, excessively hot weather or poor air quality**

In the case of thunderstorms, frigid temperatures, excessively hot weather or poor air quality, children will be kept indoors for the duration of the threat.

### **Wildfires**

If at any time our area is put on pre evacuation orders due to the imminent danger of a wildfire, parents will be notified immediately to come pick up their child, and school will remain closed for the duration of the order or until staff believes it is safe to reopen with caution. There will not be discounts or reimbursement for tuition during these closures up to ten business days. If the school must remain closed past the 10 business days, tuition will be reviewed at that time. Each circumstance is unique and will be handled on an individual basis.

### **Lunch and Snack**

**Lunch:** Tree of Life Discovery School's policy is to promote grace and courtesy and healthy nutrition through education. Lunch tables are prepared with place mats, napkins, dishes and glasses. In order to develop community manners and respect we request:

- No drinks in water bottles, cans or boxes. We serve organic 2% white milk, almond milk and water served in pitchers.
- Only basic foods, such as protein, fruits, vegetables, grains or dairy products.
- No sweets or "empty calories" such as chips, cookies, cakes, fruit snacks etc.
- Hot food can be brought to school in a thermos to keep it warm until lunch time. Teachers will not heat up food in the microwave. Sometimes we enjoy picnicking around the neighborhood and it's impossible to heat up hot food.
- Limit number of food items to 2-4. Too many options overwhelm a child.
- Reusable containers are encouraged to minimize our impact on the environment.



- Children eat only the food they bring. Sharing with friends is prohibited because of allergies and parental preferences.

Tree of Life Discovery School stresses the importance of a good diet for a growing child: junk foods, additives, food coloring, hidden sugars, and so on are not only empty calories and devoid of solid nutrition, but are also a low source of energy. Please ensure your child brings only healthy foods to school and respect this policy as a reflection of our respect for the whole child.

**Due to the severe nature of nut allergies, when a child who is allergic to nuts is enrolled, we will enact a peanut free policy.**

**Snack:** Tree of Life Discovery School will provide a healthy and nutritious snack twice a day (morning and afternoon). We use the same nutritional guidelines for snacks as we do for lunch. Snacks will consist of fruits, vegetables, crackers/grains and dairy.

### **Bottle Transitioning**

Bottles will not be given to children 2 years of age and older as they are no longer developmentally appropriate. When a child has reached the developmental stage of holding his/her own bottle, sitting up and is crawling, he or she is ready to begin transitioning from the bottle to a cup. We will communicate with the parent to develop and plan together for bottle transitioning.

### **Sign in/Sign out**

All children must be signed in and out on a daily basis when they arrive and leave, per licensing regulations. We currently use Bright Wheel app for signing children in and out each day. We also use this platform for billing. It is the responsibility of the parent to register and obtain a login code to properly sign and child in and out. A school tablet or phone is available to enter your specific code, but parents must have their own code.

### **Pick-Up**

1. Children are to be picked up at the front door at or before 5:30pm each school day. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, children will be ready at the front door or waiting outside for their parents. Parents will not be permitted inside at this time.



2. If a child is not picked up by 5:30pm, a late fee of \$1 per minute will be charged to your account. If a child is not picked up by 5:40pm, the teacher will contact the parents and the people listed on the emergency contact form if necessary. If a child is still not picked up and contact has not been made with any of the Emergency Contacts, we are required to call Eagle County Health and Human Services. If tardiness becomes an obvious pattern for your family, we will ask you to consider a program that is more suited for your family's needs.
3. Tree of Life Discovery School will not release a child to anyone without written authorization from the parent. Teachers will also require identification from the person picking up your child if we do not recognize the person.
4. In the event an unauthorized person attempts to pick up a child, the teacher will not allow the person to enter the school and will call the parents of the child to report the attempt. If the parents do not know the person or do not authorize the person, then the teacher shall call the local police department to report the attempt.
5. If a parent or authorized individual arrives to pick up a child and appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the teacher will encourage the parent/authorized individual to allow her to call someone else to pick up the child. If the parent/authorized individual leaves with the child, the teacher will call 911 to report them.

### Rest Time

All children are required to rest for at least 20 minutes while at school. We will provide each child with a rest mat and clean sheet to rest on. Please have your child bring a small blanket for rest time. Do not send pillows, stuffed animal, security blankets due to limited storage and sanitation. Blankets will be washed at school each week.

### Diapering and Toilet-training

Diapers are checked every 90 minutes (unless needed sooner) and changed as needed. Preventative diaper rash creams such as petroleum jelly or diaper rash ointments can be applied when needed. When a child is in pull-ups or diapers, parents will need to provide:

- A package of diapers, labeled with the child's name
- Diaper wipes, labeled with the child's name
- Diaper rash ointment/cream, labeled with the child's name



## Tuition and Fees

The parent/guardian must pay for the entire contracted time whether or not his or her child attends. Monthly rates are the same regardless of school closures, holidays, illnesses, weather-related closures and vacations. Our program averages the cost of childcare throughout the entire year, including days we are closed. All scheduled closures are below, and a school calendar with specific days will be issued at the beginning of every school year (beginning of September) or on enrollment. In the unlikely event we will not be able to provide care due to Teacher illness or emergency, we will notify you at least 24 hours in advance **when possible**. If our program is closed due to Teacher illness for more than three days in a calendar year, then for any additional paid days we will provide the credit for one day of care on your next monthly statement. This policy does not pertain to weather-related or emergency safety closures.

Tuition is due by the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. If tuition is received after the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month, you will be charged a \$15.00 late fee on your next month's invoice. If tuition is received after the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, you will be charged an additional \$15.00 late fee and the child will not be allowed to attend until payment is received in full. In order to keep up with the rising costs of running a quality program, tuition will be reviewed on a yearly basis with the possibility of an increase. Parents will be notified well in advance of any changes.

## School Calendar

Tree of Life Discovery School is a 12-month program. The school year runs from the beginning of September to the end of May, and the Summer program runs from beginning of June through end of August. The school will be closed for the following vacations and holidays:

Memorial Day

4<sup>th</sup> of July observed

Labor Day

Thanksgiving Day and day after

Holiday Break – 1 week including Christmas day and New Year's Day

Spring Break – 1 week in March



Summer Break – 1 week during the summer months

Please check the school calendar each year for specific dates of school closures

### Special Needs Children

Tree of Life Discovery School welcomes the opportunity to work with children with special needs; however, the number and training of our staff may limit our abilities to best accommodate specific needs.

### Visitors

Visitors must check in with a staff member and sign in indicating when they visited and the purpose of the visit. Spontaneous visits are discouraged but observations and tours by appointments are welcome.

### Video viewing/Television

Tree of Life Discovery School does not use television or videos within the classroom.

### Volunteers

Volunteerism allows parents to contribute to the school. We understand that each family has different commitments and schedules; for this reason, we try to offer different volunteer options for those who are interested. We only expect families to do what they are able to for the school. Please speak with the teacher if you are interested in being a parent volunteer.

### Withdrawal from the program

Tree of Life Discovery School requires a one-month advance notification in writing if a child will be leaving the program. This will allow for the staff to review applications, schedule tours and place the right child in the program. If the staff determine that the program is not a good fit for a family, the school will give one-month advance notice in writing to allow the family to find another program for the child.



Sign and return to Tree of Life Discovery School on first day of attendance.

Please note that the policies and procedures in the handbook are subject to revision as deemed necessary.

**Parent acknowledgment**

I have read and agree to abide by the rules and policies of Tree of Life Discovery School as specified in the parent handbook.

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Child's Name

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Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

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Parent/Guardian Signature

Date



## 2020 – 2021 School Calendar

**September 2020 - August 2021**

**Tree of Life Discovery School will observe the following holidays and will be closed for the following vacations:**

Labor Day – Monday, September 7, 2020

Thanksgiving break – Thursday, November 26 and Friday, November 27, 2020

Holiday break – Friday December 25, 2020 – January 1, 2021

Spring break – Monday, March 22 – Friday, March 26, 2021

Memorial Day – Monday, May 31, 2021

Summer Break – Friday, June 4 – Monday, June 14, 2021(returning Tuesday, July 15<sup>th</sup>)

4<sup>th</sup> of July Observed – Monday, July 5, 2021