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## WELCOME

Welcome to the Caspar Creek Learning Community (CCLC). We were founded in Mendocino, California in the summer of 2000 as part of the Mattole Valley Charter School, located in Humboldt County. It has been exciting to see the realization of our vision to create a public education alternative for families on the Mendocino Coast.

This handbook was designed to help you better understand our learning community. Please read it thoroughly. If you have any questions or comments, please share them with us. Through clear communication and understanding, we hope to create a safe and successful learning environment for our students.

## MISSION

The mission of the Caspar Creek Learning Community is to prepare kindergarten through fifth-grade students to be socially literate, to calculate and think logically and to read, write, and speak clearly. Students will be taught respect for the earth and encouraged to become life-long learners engaged in community life. This will be achieved through small class sizes, multi-age classroom environments, interactive learning with peers and staff, project based learning, developmentally appropriate use of technology, active involvement of parents and other community members, and the utilization of the natural habitat provided by the seven acres, adjacent to Russian Gulch State Park, on which our learning center is situated, as well as the surrounding Mendocino coastal area. Our learning community serves students and their families living on the Mendocino Coast.

## PHILOSOPHY

The parents and faculty of the Caspar Creek Learning Community believe that our children's educational experience can have a huge impact on the quality of their entire life. We believe that the most desirable school experience, and education, happens in an environment where students are known individually and personally, where they receive direct, high quality attention, where their actual needs are being met, and where their potential is being realized. We want our children to grow and learn in an environment where they are respected, and taught to respect each other. CCLC emphasizes social development, including teaching and practicing conflict resolution skills. Our goal is to lay the foundation for an education that helps our children grow into creative, truthful, compassionate adults who continue learning, and contributing meaningfully to society throughout their lives.

CCLC has three full-time teachers, a part-time aide, and approximately forty students. We welcome the whole child (body-mind-spirit) into our learning community. In order to help each student reach his or her highest intellectual potential, we strive to listen to, respect, support, and lovingly care for every individual. Each child makes an important contribution to our community. Adjustments in lessons and daily routine occur often in order to address the varying needs and rhythms of our student population. Our morning circles are always a place for listening, understanding, and communicating.

A unique and important aspect of the Caspar Creek Learning Community is the attention we give to emotional needs. We believe it is imperative that children develop an emotional intelligence (self awareness and a verbal ability to communicate feelings). By modeling and practicing skills of effective communication children develop tools for social success.

We use the Trust Circle to solve social problems that can arise out of living together in an active evolving, human community. The Trust Circle is a commitment to solving problems through listening. It is important work in which we really listen and speak our true feelings without judging others. Please refer to the discipline section for more information on the Trust Circle.

We also give attention to the underlying issues that cause statements such as, "I don't want to read that book," or, "This math is boring." Energy for intellectual growth is most available when basic needs can be met and core emotional issues are addressed.

We do not believe any one method or curriculum holds a perfect answer and solution for everyone. Rather than focus on a specific curriculum, we are observant of individual style, personal energy, and group dynamics. We tailor academic work to the needs of each learner. CCLC students work independently, in small groups, and in whole group lessons. In small groups, children practice cooperation and benefit from the excitement born of shared ideas. During our whole group multi-age lessons, children develop empathy, community interest, and social growth. Parents are an important part of student learning and as a community we depend on family involvement to help with enrichment.

## CURRICULUM

We remain aware of and draw from the California State Standards for development of our curriculum. Although we meet or exceed these standards, we do not teach standardized text and, as a multi-grade program, we do not teach each grade standard to each grade every year. If you would like to view the California State Standards, we have a copy available at the Learning Center. You can also view them on California Department of Education's website at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/standards/>.

In the kindergarten-first grade program, children are allowed to blossom in their own time. We nurture head, heart and hands. Our days are filled with singing, movement, painting, planting, cooking, and listening to the glorious language of stories. Each day is woven with a comforting rhythm. This natural flow allows a breathing in and a breathing out, expanding through outdoor play and large motor activities, and coming together quietly through morning circle or story time. An important part of our curriculum is the time we spend learning to get along and be a community of caring, supportive friends. A reverence for the earth is cultivated. Our classroom is one of simplicity and we care for it well.

It is through listening to stories, playing with language, memorizing verses, deciphering patterns, copying forms, learning songs, internalizing dances, measuring ingredients, observing plants & animals, and learning how to get along with others that the real "academic" work occurs.

First graders will be supported to read, write, and uncover the world of mathematics in a deeper way. They will continue exploring their surroundings, all the time learning about the world around them. In the K-1 program our goal is for each child to find a deep sense of belonging and to grow in an unhurried, organic way.

Our second through fifth grade students are usually divided into groups according to their age and ability during reading/writing and mathematical reasoning. We often have mixed groups for other subjects. Our language arts program includes a variety of teaching methods: phonic skills practice for use in the context of reading and writing, to whole language prewriting activities; shared jokes to literary analysis; spelling practice to creative and didactic writing. Our mathematical reasoning instruction includes work with geometry, algebra, standard algorithms, manipulatives, measuring, diagrams, and estimation—all with the intention of creating overall comfort with numbers and mathematical concepts. We support and encourage a love, enthusiasm, and exploration of the arts and sciences with crafts, music, 'hands on' history and science, and many ongoing projects and themes.

## HOMESCHOOLING

CCLC offers a homeschooling option for K-6 students who do not participate in site-based instruction. Every twenty learning days, about once each month, the teacher and home schooling family meet to plan curriculum and evaluate completed work.

## LEARNING RECORDS / PORTFOLIOS

CCLC's funding is based on a combination of enrollment and the content and quality of student learning records and portfolios, which are compiled on a regular basis by the teachers. Separate learning records and portfolios are submitted to Mattole Valley Charter School for each student. For parents who would like to follow what is being studied, copies of our learning records are available. We will regularly send these home for any family that requests them.

The learning records consist of itemized reports of activities in the following learning areas: Mathematical Reasoning, Reading /Writing, Scientific Concepts, History of Mankind, Functioning in the World, and Special Interests, Talents, and Abilities. Separately, Portfolios consist of two labeled samples from each of the above learning areas for every child and are submitted twice during the school year.

The Learning Records are a good source of information for parents wanting a thorough account of what their children are studying. Notify the teachers if you would like to receive copies of your child's Learning Records.

## HOMEWORK

The homework issue/decision comes up frequently and is met with as many differing opinions as we have families. Our basic philosophy is that homework has some value. Homework should not be so burdensome as to create disaster and anguish at home; this defeats the purpose of the homework. It should not require so much time that children cannot play and enjoy family time. Homework is a helpful way to increase practice in some skills and understand that learning is done wherever you are, not just in classes. For students who are not yet reading for pleasure, homework helps develop the habit of regular reading. When homework is initiated, it is ideal to have students at the age and readiness so that they may take full responsibility for their own study/homework.

Our basic plan is to provide any participating student with some math and reading work. The assignments go home each Monday and are due the following Thursday. This gives three nights to plan the time for doing the assignments. It gives us time on Thursday and Friday to follow up with any student who had difficulty with the assignments or who has not completed the work.

It is essential that families desiring homework understand their obligation. Although it should not be necessary for you to 'do' your child's homework with them, your support in providing the appropriate time, place, and routine is critical. Your availability to assist, if there is need, is often an asset. None of us work well when hungry, tired, or distressed. If you do choose the option of regular homework, we will expect that it is completed and brought to the learning center on the due date. If a situation arises and a student is unable to complete homework by the due date, parents can write a note excusing their child for the week or requesting a later due date. If homework is not complete and no note is sent to teachers, students will be asked to complete homework during break time.

Family life for many seems to involve lots of scheduled activities and long parental work hours. For some, it may be impossible to fit homework into complex life styles. Therefore, you may opt to have no homework. You may choose this option for the entire year or during especially stressful times. Homework is not assigned to kindergartners. We expect all children in second through fifth grades to read at home every day, whether or not there is an assignment.

## LEARNING COMMUNITY & GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The legal body responsible for the CCLC is the Mattole Valley Charter School (MVCS), located in Humboldt County. On a practical day-to-day level, the CCLC is governed by our own Parent Advisory Council (PAC), which is composed of seven volunteer members drawn from parents and staff. The purpose of the PAC is to conduct strategic planning for the learning community and to ensure that it achieves its educational and financial goals. Following is an overview of the job descriptions for the PAC positions. PAC positions are two-year terms.

### Voting Members of PAC

#### 1. Point Person

- First point of contact for teachers re: site and general education issues and emergencies. Facilitates and delegates school business as necessary, so that teaching staff can focus on teaching.
- Holds vision of the learning community and the big picture
- Oversees all communications between CCLC and the public
- Creates agendas and leads PAC meetings

#### 2. Enrollment Coordinator

- Coordinates enrollment with teachers and invites new enrollees
- Organizes visiting days for prospective new families
- Assists teachers with annual re-enrollment forms

#### 3. Fundraising Coordinator

- Manages a fundraising team and oversees all fundraising activities and events
- Coordinates with the raffle coordinator and organizes the drawing party
- Prepares and sends annual letter to alumni re raffle tickets and drawing party

#### 4. Budget Manager

- Prepares an annual budget for Mattole, and a CCLC budget and fundraising estimate
- Communicates with parents re “school operations fund”
- Liaisons with Mattole
- Writes checks and makes deposits as needed
- Prepares monthly income & expense and cash flow reports for PAC meetings

#### 5. Secretary

- Takes Board minutes, distribute and amends as needed
- Advertises PAC meetings
- Moderates Facebook page *(or by Webmaster)*

#### 6. Parent Liaison

- Provides support to parents and conveys to teachers/PAC parent feedback. Encourages parents to dialogue with teachers and each other.
- Organizes and moderates discussions and parent meetings
- Prepares parent packets in August *(or by Enrollment Coordinator)*
- Tracks annual packet materials returned by parents and distributes as needed
- Keeps a database of current students and alumni *(or by Enrollment Person)*

#### 7. Teacher Representative

## Other CCLC Leadership Roles (Non-voting)

### Raffle Coordinator

- Arranges venues, enters in raffle event scheduler, advertises to parents, fills in as needed
- Oversees ticket printing, distribution, and tracking
- Oversees set-up for venues

### Web Master

- Maintains and updates the website as needed
- Moderates Facebook Page *(or by PAC Secretary)*

### Buildings and Grounds Coordinator

- Oversees maintenance of the grounds and site improvement projects
- Coordinates projects and maintenance tasks with work party coordinator

### Listserve Administrator

- Enters new family email addresses and updates as needed
- Manages posts from non-members through the year

### Transportation Coordinator

- Arranges for bus service with provider Redwood Coast Senior Center (RCSC) and renews annual agreements
- Provides Mendocino Recreation Center sign-up forms for parents and sends reminders to parents re: sign-up schedule and policies with each new Rec. Center schedule
- Processes checks and scholarships and forwards funds to provider
- Provides updated rider lists to teachers, driver, and RCSC staff
- Provides driver, RCSC staff, and Mendo. Rec. Center staff with school schedule and keeps all informed when conference week, holidays, power outages, and field trips effect the bus schedule

### School Enrichment Fund Coordinator

- Coordinates with teachers what their material needs are for the year
- Publicizes to parents and coordinates funds with purchases

### Work Party Coordinator

- With buildings & grounds coordinator, organizes and prioritizes projects for work parties
- Advertises quarterly work parties to community and promotes participation
- Assembles necessary tools and supplies, and posts chores

### Field Trip Coordinator

- Assists teachers in identifying and planning field trip opportunities
- Assist teachers in tracking permission forms, payments from parents, food and emergency bags for drivers, and managing drivers (paperwork, maps, etc.)

## ADMISSIONS

### *Enrollment*

We serve any child, regardless of ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability.

Because our enrollment is limited by the capacity of our learning center site, we often have more applicants than spaces available. When that happens, we may give preference according to the following criteria:

1. The need to balance gender and age of the student body,
2. Sibling relationship to a current or graduated CCLC student,
3. Current enrollment as a student in the CCLC, and
4. The length of time an applicant has been on the waiting list.

In the event there are more applicants equally meeting the above criteria than openings appropriate for them, attendance will be decided by a public random drawing of only those applicants.

To place a child in the pool of prospective students, parents submit a Prospective Student Application form. When an appropriate opening becomes available they are notified by phone and/or mail. They are asked at that time to declare whether they want to accept the available opening. We ask that they take no longer than seven days to inform us of their decision. After that time, the opening may be offered to another family. It is the responsibility of each family in the pool of prospective students to keep the CCLC informed of their current contact information.

### *Changes in Student Information*

Please inform the learning center staff in writing at once of any changes in the information contained in the enrollment forms you completed at the beginning of the school year.

### *Withdrawal Procedure*

Our learning community's small size and budget make it necessary to maintain stable enrollment by filling vacancies as soon as they occur. To help us accomplish this, please notify the teachers of your intention to withdraw your child at least two weeks prior to your child's last day of enrollment, or by May 1<sup>st</sup> if they won't be continuing in the fall.

### *Extended Enrollment*

Sixth grade is offered, when possible, depending on the individual student's needs. If you want your child to attend sixth grade classes with CCLC, please submit your request to the teachers by May 1<sup>st</sup> of your child's fifth grade year.

### *Learning Community Directory*

Each year we create a learning community directory that lists each student's name, parent/guardian name(s), address, home & work telephone numbers, and email addresses. It is the policy of the learning community to distribute this information to all families unless a parent or guardian notifies Learning Center staff otherwise in writing. The information on this list is for learning community related use only.

## ATTENDANCE

Your child's consistent attendance is very important to her/his success and contributes to the unity and success of the learning community. Many of the lessons are presented orally and as group interactions. A student who is frequently absent may find it difficult to make up work or fully understand the material.

### *Arrival & Dismissal*

The learning center opens at 8:30 AM. Students should arrive between 8:30 and 8:50 AM. Kindergarten classes are in session from 9:00 AM until 12:30 PM. First through fifth grade classes are in session from 9:00 AM until 3:00 PM; Wednesday classes end at 12:30 PM for all grades. Students may arrive no earlier than 8:30 and parents are encouraged to bring children to the learning center no later than 8:50. Arriving early gives children time to socialize, run outside and/or settle in before classes begin. Each day begins with an opening circle at 9:00 AM and ends with a closing circle. This rhythm helps the children get centered in their classroom environment. Please be mindful of the arrival time in order to ensure your child a healthy start in his/her day. This will benefit your child and the whole community.

CCLC closes at 3:00 PM (12:30 PM on Wednesdays). Please pick up your child promptly. At closing time, children are expected to wait in the buildings or in the play yard for parents to pick them up. Please park your car and walk into the play yard to get your children. Children will not go to the parking area to find a parent. We ask that drivers exercise extreme caution in our parking areas, never exceeding 5 mph.

### *Carpool & Bus Transportation*

CCLC staff must be notified of all car pool arrangements and must be notified in advance, in writing, if anyone other than you or those on your emergency form will pick up your child. Please also inform your child regularly of what their current carpool arrangement is.

One-way bus service from CCLC to the Mendocino Recreation Center is available for a nominal fee through the Redwood Coast Senior Center on some weekdays after school. Contact the parent liaison for details.

### *Absences & Tardiness*

Parents should call and inform the CCLC staff anytime a child will be late or absent so we can hold a place and make adjustments to plans for the day. In a small learning community everyone counts (a lot)! Please make it your priority to have your child arrive on time. Students arriving late often interrupt ongoing activities and miss important parts of class meetings and decision-making.

We ask you to keep children home when they are ill. Parents will be called to pick up a child with a communicable illness.

Please let the CCLC staff know as soon as possible when your child will be absent from classes. For extended absences (five days or more), we will work with you to arrange activities for your child to complete while away.

## SPECIAL NEEDS

Children grow and learn at their own rate, and may not always progress or perform at grade level in every aspect of their academic life. Mattole Valley Charter School and Caspar Creek Learning Center offer state mandated services for learners who require special accommodations. When teachers or parents are concerned about a student's academic progress, extra classroom accommodations are implemented. The teacher also works together with the parents to determine at-home support options.

Parents have a right to advocate for their child's education, and can play an active role in getting their student's needs met. If either a teacher or a parent desires additional academic support, the procedure described below is followed:

- A written referral is sent to the Mattole Valley Charter school psychologist.

- The school psychologist schedules a Student Study Team (SST) meeting with the parents, teacher, and any other person involved with the child's academic progress. During this meeting, the team determines whether the student needs help by remediation only, or needs to be referred for formal assessment in order to determine eligibility for Special Education services.

- The school psychologist and resource specialist conduct the evaluation.

- If eligible for special education services, the school psychologist, resource specialist, parents, and the teacher meet. At this meeting, necessary services are identified and an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan, with clearly defined goals and objectives, is created.

- Each year the resource specialist, parents and teacher attend an IEP review meeting.

- Every three years the student is reassessed.

The resource specialist visits the CCLC site about every three to four weeks to evaluate the students who have IEP's or 504 plans and to supervise our instructional aide who administers direct services on site, three days per week. In addition to being employed by the Mattole School District to work with students who receive special education services, the current instructional aide is available for hire as a private tutor. In some cases, the PAC may fund tutoring for students who do not qualify for special education services, but who could benefit from short-term support.

A speech pathologist comes to our site each week to provide speech services for students who are IEP's specify that accommodation. She also conducts evaluations for speech services.

Parents are encouraged to check in regularly with their child's teacher and bring any suggestions, questions, or concerns to her. For further information about IEP's or 504 plans, talk to your child's teacher or contact Beverly Haywood, resource specialist, 707-496-3341, bab6@humboldt.edu or Mitch Block, school psychologist, 707-834-6663, mitchblock@hotmail.com

## PARENT EXPECTATIONS & PARTICIPATION COMMITMENT

**Families of Caspar Creek Learning Community students are expected to be active participants in their child(ren)'s education and in the learning community.** This participation is essential to our continued success. Parents of a child enrolled in CCLC have responsibilities not typically associated with public schools.

First and foremost is a willingness to understand and embrace the philosophy of the learning community. Parents who embrace and support this educational philosophy at home enhance the students' experience at the learning center. To that end, parents are asked to read this handbook in its entirety.

Parents are asked to help the students develop a sense of responsibility and a commitment to active learning community participation. We would like you to discuss your child's learning with your child and with the teachers, to read to—and with—your child frequently, and to provide an appropriate setting and schedule for homework. Please also provide for your child's adequate rest and nutrition and regular, punctual attendance so that they will be ready and able to participate in their day at the learning center.

Families of the students of the CCLC are expected to contribute in the following areas:

### *Friday Tea*

Each family will be asked to provide a snack for one or more Friday Tea times. Tea time normally begins thirty minutes before dismissal. Parents will receive a schedule of their designated contribution days.

### *Work Days*

There will be scheduled family workdays a few times over the school year to assist in maintenance of the buildings, outdoor areas and play equipment.

### *Parent-teacher conferences*

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled every fall for each child, and in the spring by request. Conferences can also occur throughout the year, as per teacher or parent request. Conferences are important opportunities for you and your child's teacher to share information and insight. Parents are encouraged to use this tool any time you have a question or concern.

### *Fundraising*

As part of the original vision of our learning community, it was necessary to create a school operations fund to augment the State-provided funding. This fund has two main sources of revenue: fundraising events, and direct parent donations. Parent involvement in our fund-raising events is essential to their success. It also serves to enhance and cultivate the sense of community that is integral to our philosophy. See 'School Operations Fund' in the following section for more info.

### *Helping in the Classroom*

Parents are often eager to help in the classroom and this is greatly appreciated. Some parents are unable to help in the classroom and support our community in other ways. In the K-1 classroom there is a monthly sign up sheet. Parents volunteer for about an hour and a half to help with morning or afternoon activities. In the second through fifth grade classrooms parent help out by contacting teachers and scheduling times to come in. Some parents help out with specific projects while others help on a regular basis.

## OTHER IMPORTANT WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE:

### *School Operations Fund*

Our state funded budget covers only part of the cost of operating our learning center & community. Without additional funding, many of the qualities that define our learning community—its small scale, the mixed-age environment, and, in particular, the excellent student to teacher ratios, are simply not feasible.

The School Operations Fund makes up the shortfall. Direct donations from our learning community families are a crucial part of the financial picture. In fact, since its inception, about half of all School Operations Fund revenue has come directly from our learning community's families. It's imperative that we continue to cultivate this steady stream of support for our learning community.

The School Operations Fund needs the support of every family. The recommended donation of \$50 per enrolled child per month is what is needed to make our learning center and community sustainable. We ask each family to make a commitment to support our learning community in this way. If you are able to donate more generously, please do, as the diversity of circumstances within our learning community means there will be some who cannot contribute financially. Or, perhaps your circumstances are such that a lump sum is convenient. In any case, considering the benefit we all derive from the learning community, this is a small price to pay.

Donations to the School Operations Fund are not required, and will be kept confidential. No distinction will ever be made based on donations. There are many ways that each of us contributes to the learning community, and all are valuable. If you have questions or would like more information about the School Operations Fund and its role, please feel free to contact any PAC member.

### *Skills & Talents*

We often request help from parents with particular areas of expertise to help with special work projects and/or curriculum enrichment. If you have a skill or talent that you would like to share with our learning community, please contact the teachers.

### *Coordinators*

There are several coordinator positions that need to be filled at the beginning of each year. Written descriptions can be found in the Learning Community & Governance Structure section of this handbook. In addition, there are the following assigned roles to be filled: Friday tea treat/cleaning calendar creator, cup washer, towel washer, head lice coordinator, carpooling coordinator, scholastic books coordinator, garbage and recycling manager, and supply coordinator (purchase cleaning supplies and toiletries). Please speak to the parent liaison if you would like to volunteer for one of these.

### *Parent Advisory Council*

The purpose of the PAC is to conduct strategic planning for the learning community and to ensure that we achieve its educational and financial goals. The PAC is comprised of seven volunteer members drawn from the Caspar Creek Learning Community parent body and staff. PAC members serve two-year terms. An overview of PAC positions appears under "Learning Community & Governance Structure" in this handbook. Please contact the point person if you are interested in serving on this council.

### *Field Trips*

Staff and/or parents, who are licensed, insured drivers provide transportation for field trips. On many outings, parent volunteers will be sought to help supervise and transport the children.

Parent field trip drivers must have valid driver's license, a good driving record, and current liability insurance with bodily injury coverage of at least \$100,000 per occurrence. Their car must be in good working order, including the seat belts. In addition, parents must only carry the number of children for which their vehicle was designed. All children must wear seat belts and use booster seats as required. California law requires children under the age of 8 to be secured in a car seat or booster seat in the back seat. Children under the age of 8 who are 4' 9" or taller may be secured by a safety belt in the back seat.

### *Cleaning*

Families in rotating shifts perform general cleaning once a week. Families will be notified at the beginning of the school year. If a family is assigned to a date that will not work, they can trade with another family, or hire someone else to do the cleaning.

## STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

### *Food*

Students should eat a nutritional and adequate breakfast at home each morning, and bring both a lunch and a mid-morning snack from home daily. Kindergartners bring snack only. We have a hot water pot in the upper building for use by everyone.

Often students are so active at the learning center that they eat more than their parents expect. We like to see nutritious and well-balanced foods being consumed by students. Many students who eat refined sugar and/or chemical products have difficulty concentrating in class. This can lead to disruptions for all students. Please refrain from bringing foods and drinks with artificial ingredients and preservatives, and those in which sugar is a main ingredient. Please do not bring candy, gum, or sweetened soda to the learning center.

Please bring a mug from home for drinks of water and for Friday afternoon tea. Mugs occasionally get broken, so please don't bring a family heirloom. All students, K-5: please bring a hand towel for use at school. Kindergartners and first graders should also bring a bowl.

We ask that you take home all garbage and recyclables that result from your lunches & snacks.

### *Attire*

Please wear washable, comfortable clothes to the learning center. We do a lot of outside activities, including spontaneous hikes, and use a lot of paint, glue, clay, etc. Kindergartners and first graders should have a complete extra set of clothing at school. For second through fifth graders the extra set of clothing is optional.

It is important that each student have comfortable, supportive shoes at the Learning Center for walks, sports, and play. If you are not wearing these shoes, bring some "sport" shoes with you or keep a spare pair in your cubby, so they are available when needed.

Please wear or bring rain boots and a raincoat during wet & rainy weather, as we often still go outside. Please provide an extra pair of shoes, or slippers, so we can leave wet or muddy rain boots outside.

### *Classroom Behavior*

We will provide a learning center environment that fosters cooperation, responsibility and respect. The teachers will communicate their expectations to the students, and will determine an appropriate consequence if a student disregards those expectations.

At all times, we expect the students to clean up after themselves and each other.

Please do not bring toys or materials that promote violence, racism, or gender stereotyping to the learning center.

## DISCIPLINE

Caspar Creek Learning Community teachers endeavor to model appropriate behavior and respect, using preventative management strategies, and helping the children with problem solving and conflict resolution. They actively pursue a healthy rapport with each student, looking for and commenting on positive behaviors, and validating efforts and progress, as well as arranging the physical environment, curriculum and activities to engage and inspire the students. These types of encouragement build self-esteem, confidence and security, and produce a desire for self-discipline in the students.

Disagreement may arise in any community; such differences are an inevitable consequence of human interaction. As described in our philosophy statement, CCLC puts emphasis on discovering the underlying reason of any problem that arises. Teachers urge the children to express their feelings so that resolutions can be reached.

The primary tool for addressing problems that arise in our learning community is the Trust Circle. We work to really listen, and speak our true feelings, without judging each other. When trust grows and there is no fear of punishment children are willing to take responsibility for their actions. It is often the bully or the perpetrator of the “crime” that most needs loving understanding. We have witnessed much growth, and amazing courage and caring in children as a result of the Trust Circles.

Occasionally the teachers need to use a short time out if a child persists in an undesirable behavior or is too out of control. A child may voluntarily choose to take a time out. Time out is useful to help children calm down, gain control of themselves, and identify and the problem. We aim to teach children to resolve disputes creatively. In a most situations, the parties involved resolve the problems between themselves.

We find it important for our teachers to be aware of changes that occur at home. Because events such as separation, moving, births or deaths can affect the child’s behavior, the teachers can be sensitive to those problems if they are so informed. We believe that education should be a joyful and positive experience for each child. To achieve this end, we wish to emphasize the importance of sound communication between parent and teacher.

## FAMILY LIFESTYLE

Because we believe that it is helpful for the student's home life to provide consistency with the teaching philosophy of the learning community, we encourage you to include the following items in your lifestyle:

### *Nutrition & Rest*

It is important to place value on good nutrition and to make a commitment to choosing low-sugar foods.

Proper rest and a healthy breakfast are important. A student's successes and achievements are very much influenced by appropriate diet and rest.

### *Student Support*

Regular and punctual attendance is necessary. It is best that children arrive ten to twenty minutes before classes begin, and they must be picked up promptly at dismissal time. Arriving at least ten minutes before classes begin allows the student time to acclimate to being at the learning center, and allows us to begin our program promptly and smoothly with all present.

Be familiar with the homework policy. Set up a reasonable time and space for homework. Contact your child's teacher if concerns arise over homework.

### *Family Participation*

Incorporate your child's help in your daily activities in order to help them develop a sense of responsibility, importance and belonging in the family.

Allow plenty of creative playtime at home and have constructive activities available for your child.

Read to your child every day, even if they can already read by themselves.

### *Television*

We request that our families put forth a conscious effort to minimize or even eliminate the use of television, videos, video games, computer games and feature movies for children's entertainment and education. Encourage interaction with the environment rather than being passively entertained. Development takes place by interaction and observation, not by observation alone.

## PARENT VISITATION

### *Friday Tea*

Every Friday, normally beginning thirty minutes before dismissal, second through fifth graders have tea time and sharing. First graders have their tea time on the last Friday of the month. This is a good time for children to bring stories or items from home they would like to share with the whole group. Family members and friends are welcome to join us at this time. Families will receive a schedule in the beginning of the school year with an assignment of a specific date(s) to bring a treat. A parent coordinator organizes this schedule and contacts parents prior to their scheduled day.

### *Morning Circle*

We prefer to have parents visit during Morning Circle only when they have some specific business that they would like to bring to the circle. Having people visit during Morning Circle has sometimes been uncomfortable for children whose parents are not available, or who are shy about speaking when different adults and visitors are present.

### *Visitation*

Caspar Creek Learning Community has visiting days scheduled in the spring for prospective students and their families. To be notified of these dates, or for other individual needs, please contact the enrollment coordinator on the Parent Advisory Council. Appointments for visiting will be arranged by the enrollment person and the teachers.

### *Helping in the Classroom*

Parents are often eager to help in the classroom and this is greatly appreciated. Some parents are unable to help in the classroom and they can support our community in other ways. In the k-1 classroom there is a monthly sign up sheet. Parents volunteer for about an hour and a half to help with morning or afternoon activities. In the second through fifth grade classrooms parents contact teachers and scheduling times to come into the classroom. Some parents help intermittently with specific projects while others help on a regular basis.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

The students go on several field trips throughout the school year. Parents will be notified of trips ahead of time, usually in a newsletter and/or by special notice. However, students may sometimes participate in spontaneous field trips (usually walks).

Traveling in carpools, our field trip transportation is provided by staff and/or parents who are licensed, insured drivers. On many outings, parent volunteers will be sought to help transport the children, and to facilitate a safe, fun, and interesting learning experience for all of the students. However, it has proven to be in the children's best interest to have the minimum number of adults necessary for the trip, and thus additional parents will not ordinarily accompany the class.

California law requires children under the age of 8 to be secured in a car seat or booster seat in the back seat. Children under the age of 8 who are 4' 9" or taller may be secured by a safety belt in the back seat. If your child still legally requires a car booster seat, please leave one at the learning center on the day of the field trip.

If you are interested in helping teachers coordinate field trips, please let them know. See page 7 for more details.

## COMMUNICATION

### *Parent Information Boards*

There are bulletin boards in both buildings where information for parents will be posted. This area is used for announcements such as parent meetings, class schedules, field trip and meeting information, and all newsletters sent home are posted there. The school operations fund 'in box' is also located there.

### *Newsletters from Teachers*

Newsletters contain important information on field trips, meeting dates, classroom activities, etc. Please be sure to read these in a timely manner, as they are often used to communicate important items to you. All newsletters are e-mailed and/or posted on the parent information board.

### *Communication with the Parent Advisory Council*

The Parent Advisory Council (PAC) meeting minutes are available at school and, when necessary, the PAC members e-mail information out to the entire parent body. If you have suggestions or concerns, please direct them to the parent liaison. We welcome your ideas and feedback.

### *Conferences*

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled every fall for each child, and in the spring by request. Conferences can also occur throughout the year, as per teacher or parent request. It is helpful to notify the teachers of any changes happening at home that may affect the child (moving, death, birth, etc.) Parents may request a conference at any time.

### *Concerns*

When you have a concern about your child, an event, or a practice at the Learning Center, the best first step is having a conversation with your child's teacher(s). We are committed to making your child's education experience as positive as possible. Please remember that teachers need to *know* about problems before they can address them.

### *Concern Procedure*

If resolution of a classroom problem is not achieved between teacher and parent, either a parent or the teacher may bring the matter to the PAC. All formal grievances should be in writing, explaining the problem clearly and concisely, should include a signature and date, and be presented to the PAC parent liaison.

### *Telephone Calls*

Students may use the learning center phone during breaks. Calls during class time can be disruptive, and we encourage parents who wish to speak to their child, or a teacher, to call during the lunch period from 12:20 PM to 1:00 PM.

### *Telephone Communication*

Each year a family phone list is created and distributed to the parent body. All phone contact data is also put into an automated calling system. In situations when everyone needs to be contacted quickly our Point Person activates the system and all families are called with the same message. Examples of this might be a weather-related learning center closure, or a change in a parent body meeting.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

An emergency information sheet must be on file for every student and should include a signature allowing learning center staff to request medical intervention in case a parent or designee cannot be reached. This information is used to contact you if your child becomes ill during the day, is confused about after-school plans, or in any emergency situation. It is very important to have two additional emergency numbers listed for your child besides your own. It is extremely important that you keep us informed of any address or phone number changes.

### *Illness*

Please notify the learning center staff at once if your child becomes ill with a communicable disease. This allows us to keep an eye out for children that may be starting to show symptoms of illness. Please do not give your child a fever reducer before bringing the child to the learning center—children with fevers need to stay home and rest. If your child becomes ill at the learning center and we are unable to contact you, we will attempt to notify one of the other people listed on your child’s emergency sheet.

If your child has been ill, please be sure he/she has completely recovered before returning to the learning center. Often additional time for recuperation (resting, etc.) is needed after the acute phase of an illness is over. A child who is not feeling well is not likely to learn easily and is likely to become tired, irritable, and disruptive. It’s better for your child to return well and rested. In the case of a serious illness or injury, learning center staff may require information from your doctor or hospital.

Please do not send medication to the learning center with your child. Instead, please bring it to one of the teachers yourself, with explicit, written instructions for its use. Learning center staff cannot administer medication to children without expressed parental permission.

### *Injuries*

If a student suffers a very minor injury, it will be treated at the learning center. The staff holds current first aid and CPR certification. In the event of a more serious injury, the staff will make an immediate attempt to contact a parent. If one cannot be reached, they will call the child’s physician. If necessary, an ambulance or paramedics will be called. Until the arrival of a parent, physician, or ambulance, the staff will be in charge and make all decisions about the care of the child. Parents will be held responsible for any resultant expense.

### *Head Lice*

Anyone can get head lice. If you discover lice on your child, or on any member of your family, it is important for you to immediately inform a teacher, the head lice coordinator, or the point person. Then all families will be notified and asked to check all family members. We have a detailed written head lice policy that will be distributed and instituted immediately upon the discovery of head lice in our learning community. This policy outlines the roles, responsibilities and expectations of parents, staff, and students in controlling and preventing an outbreak of lice. Copies of our policy are always available. Our head lice coordinator will provide detection & treatment information and resources, and funds will be made available to help with the expense of treatment for any family that needs assistance.

Because lice are so easily transmitted, we will strictly enforce a “nit-free before return” policy, meaning that any students that have had head lice may not come to the learning center until their heads are free from lice and nits, and will be checked by a teacher or assistant before being allowed to return to class. Stigmatizing, blaming, or ostracizing is not tolerated in our learning community. The management of head lice is a community-wide issue that we all must contribute to in a cooperative, respectful, sympathetic and supportive manner.

### *Immunizations*

The public health department requires your child to be up to date on their immunizations and TB test (please check with your child's physician for the current requirements.) If you do not immunize your child you will need to sign a waiver. Non-immunized children may possibly be excluded from attendance at the Learning Center in the event of an outbreak of a communicable disease. Please keep your immunization record on file at the Learning Center current.

California law currently allows parents/guardians to choose exemption from immunization requirements based on their personal or religious beliefs, or for medical reasons.

### *Emergencies*

We have emergency procedures that will go into effect in the event of an emergency or disaster. Your child will be cared for until you are able to pick them up. In the event that the buildings must be evacuated, there will be notification posted as to the location of your child.

In the case of a power outage, the Learning Center may be closed. Someone will remain at the center or at a safe nearby location until all the children have been picked up.

### *Drop-off, Pick-up, and Parking*

Please do not leave your car where it may block the passage of another. One handicapped parking spot is available. Please use extreme caution in our parking area, never exceeding 5 mph.

To prevent confusion at the end of the day with pick ups, late arrivals, and children walking through the parking area, we are asking that children leaving the Learning Center wait with a teacher until their ride is here. This will help us know more quickly when a child is in need of our help and attention to secure transportation. It hopefully will also insure that no child wanders behind a car unnoticed.

We strongly encourage families to form car pools since we do have a parking and space problem at drop-off and pick-up time. However, the Learning Center staff must be notified of all car pool arrangements and must be notified in advance writing if anyone other than yourself or those on your emergency form is to pick up your child. Please also inform your child regularly of what their current carpool arrangement is.

## PARENT COMMITMENT CONTRACT

Families of Caspar Creek Learning Community students are expected to be active participants in their children's education and in the learning community. This participation is essential to our continued success. We ask for your agreement with the following:

I will work with my child and my child's teacher to enhance academic success.

I have received and read the Parent Handbook and am aware of the learning community's philosophy, policies, and lifestyle recommendations.

I will participate in learning community meetings, parent-teacher conferences, learning community events & activities, fundraisers, helping with maintenance projects and workdays, and contributing to Friday teas.

I understand the importance of regular and punctual attendance of my child/ren.

I understand that it is best that children arrive ten to twenty minutes before classes begin, and that they must be picked up promptly at closing time, which is 3:00 PM daily, 12:30 PM Wednesdays (12:30 PM every day for kindergartners).

I agree to actively communicate with the teachers, and to read all newsletters in a timely manner.

I/We have read the above contract and agree to the stated obligations.

Signature(s):

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Child's name(s):

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Date signed:

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*(This copy is for your records.)*