

Parent Handbook

CASPAR CREEK LEARNING COMMUNITY

2020-2021



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WELCOME

Welcome to the Caspar Creek Learning Community (CCLC).

Caspar Creek Learning Community was founded in Mendocino, California in the summer of 2000 as part of Mattole Valley Charter School, our charter school partner until 2018, when we joined Pivot Charter School North Bay for the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years.

Since then, Caspar Creek has become an independent charter school authorized by Mendocino Unified School District. It has been exciting to see the realization of our vision to create and sustain a locally-affiliated 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 use 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 two (or sometimes three) full-time credentialed teachers, several full- and part-time aides, a Site Coordinator, 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, 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 current state standards for development of our curriculum. Although we meet or exceed these standards, we do not teach standardized text and, as a mixed-age, multi-grade program, we do not teach each grade standard to each grade every year.

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 K-1 classroom is one of simplicity, and we care for it well.

In this age group, it is through listening to stories, playing with language, memorizing verses, deciphering patterns, copying forms, learning songs, internalizing dances, measuring ingredients, observing plants and 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 while 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 often 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.

Home Study Option

CCLC may at times offer a home study option for K-5 students who do not participate in in-person classes and activities. At a prescribed interval (at minimum, every twenty learning days, or at least once each month), the teacher and home study family meet to plan curriculum and evaluate completed work.

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.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Caspar Creek Learning Community is a directly funded independent charter school operated by Caspar Creek Learning Community, Inc., a California non-profit public benefit corporation that has been designated by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt organization. Authorized by Mendocino Unified School District, Caspar Creek Learning Community operates autonomously under MUSD’s oversight.

Caspar Creek Learning Community, Inc. is governed by the Caspar Creek Learning Community, Inc. Board of Directors in accordance with its adopted corporate bylaws.

ADMISSIONS

Enrollment

All students who are interested in enrolling at Caspar Creek Learning Community are required to complete an application for admission. Applications are available online or at the resource center, and completed registration forms can be submitted online, through email, postal mail or in person at the resource center.

No specialized admission tests are required; however, tests may be administered after admission to determine the proper placement of students. All students who wish to enroll in the Charter School are admitted, unless the number of applications exceeds the number of seats available. An open enrollment period is held to determine the number of applications for admission.

If the number of applications exceeds the enrollment capacity by an enrollment deadline established by the Charter School Board, a public random drawing is held. Existing students of the Charter School have an automatic right to continued enrollment in the Charter School should they wish to do so and shall not be included in the public random drawing. Caspar Creek Learning Community grants admission preference in the public random drawing as follows:

- Siblings of students admitted to or attending Caspar Creek Learning Community
- Children of Caspar Creek Learning Community employees
- Residents of the Authorizing District

The Charter School and the District agree to adhere to the requirements related to admission preferences as set forth in Education Code Section 47605(d)(2)(B)(i)-(iv).

The Board of Directors will make all necessary efforts to ensure lottery procedures are fairly executed. Lottery spaces are pulled in order of grade level by the designated lottery official (appointed by the Lead Teacher). Separate lotteries shall be conducted for each grade span in which there are fewer vacancies than pupils interested in attending. All lotteries shall take place on the same day in a single location. Lotteries will be conducted in ascending order beginning with the lowest applicable grade level. There is no weighted priority assigned to the preference categories; rather, within each grade level, students will be drawn from pools beginning with all applicants who qualify for the first preference category, and shall continue with that preference category until all vacancies within that grade level have been filled. If there are more students in a preference category than there are spaces available, a random drawing will be held from within that preference category until all available spaces are filled. If all students from the preference category have been selected and there are remaining spaces available in that grade level, students from the second preference category will be drawn in the lottery, and the drawing shall continue until all spaces are filled and preference categories are exhausted in the order provided above.

At the conclusion of the public random drawing, all students who were not granted admission due to capacity shall be given the option to put their name on a wait list according to their draw in the lottery. This wait list will allow students the option of enrollment in the case of an opening during the current school year. In no circumstance will a waitlist carry over to the following school year.

Public random drawing rules, deadlines, dates and times will be communicated in the application form and on the Charter School's website. Public notice for the date and time of the public random drawing will also be posted once the application deadline has passed. The Charter School will also inform parents of all applicants and all interested parties of the rules to be followed during the public random drawing process via mail or email at least two weeks prior to the lottery date.

The Charter School will conduct the lottery in the spring for enrollment in fall of that year.

All current students who wish to re-enroll for another school year must complete a re-enrollment form by the deadline provided, along with the paperwork required, each Spring semester. Parents and adult students will receive communication regarding re-enrollment by email and USPS mail at least one month prior to the deadline. Once the school reaches its capacity, all additional applicants will be placed on a wait list, based on their draw in the lottery. If necessary, a public lottery will be held where students will be drawn at random as described above, by a provided temporary ID number, to determine enrollment anytime within the school year when a vacancy or enrollment position becomes available. All names not selected during the first lottery will be placed on a wait list. Wait lists do not carry over from one school year to the next.

Waitlist and Subsequent Lottery Procedures

- Caspar Creek Learning Community will maintain a waitlist, populated based on a lottery draw, once the school reaches maximum enrollment capacity. Students will be placed on the waitlist

when we have received a completed enrollment packet including all required ancillary documents.
Note: Drop slips and drop grades are not included in required documentation.

- Following the initial open enrollment deadline, for applications received after the deadline, Caspar Creek Learning Community will conduct a public lottery drawing at 2:00 pm every Monday, except for holidays, if space becomes available.
- Caspar Creek Learning Community will announce all upcoming drawings on our website.
- If there are openings, families on the waitlist will also be sent an email by 12:00 pm on the day of the public lottery drawing notifying them that the lottery will take place. Families do not need to physically attend the lottery.
- To ensure confidentiality, Caspar Creek Learning Community will use a temporary ID number assigned to each student to draw students from the waitlist.
- After the public lottery drawing, families will be informed by 3:00 pm if their student's temporary ID was chosen in the drawing. If you do not receive an email and phone call, you can assume your student was not chosen from the drawing.
- Caspar Creek Learning Community will only draw for the number of spaces that became available the prior week.
- Families will have until the Wednesday immediately following the public lottery drawing by 5:00 pm to inform the Site Coordinator if they are accepting the enrollment spot, effective immediately.
- In order for a student to begin enrollment at Caspar Creek Learning Community, withdrawal grades will need to be provided. Withdrawal grades must be submitted within one week of being awarded the enrollment spot from the lottery draw or the student may lose their enrollment space.
- If a chosen student is not ready to enroll immediately at Caspar Creek Learning Community or is unresponsive, then the enrollment space will be forfeited, the family will be removed from the waitlist (unless they inform the Site Coordinator of their desire to remain on the waitlist, in writing), and the school may fill the spot at the next public lottery drawing.

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 as far in advance as possible of your intention to withdraw your child. A minimum of two weeks prior to your child's last day of enrollment is appreciated.

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 resource 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; Friday 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 often ends with a closing circle. This rhythm helps the children get centered in their learning environment. Please be mindful of the arrival time to ensure a successful start to your child's day. This will benefit your child and the whole community.

CCLC closes at 3:00 PM (12:30 PM on Fridays). 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 at least daily of what their current carpool arrangement is.

In some school years, one-way bus service from CCLC to the Community Center of Mendocino's After-School Enrichment Program is available for a nominal fee by arrangement with a local transportation provider. In the event this becomes available, details will be provided.

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. Caspar Creek Learning Community offers 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. The following is a rough outline of procedures that are described in much greater detail in the charter petition, and is not meant as a complete recital of procedures:

- A written referral is sent to the 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 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 regularly to evaluate the students who have IEP's or 504 plans and to supervise the delivery of direct services on site.

Parents are encouraged to check in regularly with their child's teacher and bring any suggestions, questions, or concerns to them. For further information about IEP's or 504 plans, talk to your child's teacher, our Site Coordinator, or contact the resource specialist or school psychologist.

PARENT EXPECTATIONS AND 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:

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.

Donations and Fundraising

As part of the original vision of our learning community, it was necessary to create opportunities to augment the state-provided funding. This relies on 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 'Donations and Fundraising' 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:

Donations and Fundraising

Our state funded budget covers only part of the cost of operating our program. 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.

Caspar Creek Learning Community, Inc. makes up the shortfall. Tax-deductible direct donations from our learning community families to CCLC, Inc., a 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt nonprofit, are a crucial part of the financial picture. In fact, since its inception, about half of all fundraising 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.

Caspar Creek needs the support of every family. The recommended donation of \$100 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.

Donations to Caspar Creek 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 nonprofit and its role, please feel free to contact any board 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 volunteer 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: Cup washer, towel washer, head lice coordinator, carpooling coordinator, waste and recycling manager, and supply coordinator (monitors stocks of cleaning supplies and toiletries). A comprehensive list with descriptions and current assignments is available on the Caspar Creek website. Please speak to a teacher, the Site Coordinator or a board member if you would like to volunteer for one of these.

Governing Board membership

The Governing Board of Caspar Creek Learning Community, Inc. conducts strategic planning for the learning community to ensure that it achieves its mission while remaining financially sound. The board consists of five to seven volunteer members selected for their knowledge and abilities to oversee the

charter school. Please contact the board president if you are interested in being considered for board membership.

Field Trips

Staff and/or parents, who are licensed, insured drivers, may at times 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 be approved by the Lead Teacher, pass a CADOJ background check, submit a TB Risk Assessment or test, and have valid driver's license, a good driving record, and current liability insurance with bodily injury coverage meeting prescribed minimums (unless driving a provided rental vehicle). Parent vehicles 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.

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. Kindergartners and first graders should also bring a bowl. We ask that you take home all garbage and recyclables that result from your lunches and 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.

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 CONSIDERATIONS

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 play time 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

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 Site Coordinator. 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 schedule 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).

Field trip transportation is provided either by bus, when available, or by staff and/or parents who are licensed, insured drivers, in their own vehicles, or, at times, in rented vehicles. 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.

Emails from Teachers

Email via the Caspar Creek Listserv is an important channel of communication at Caspar Creek. It may be used to deliver 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 convey important items to you.

Communication with the Parent Advisory Council

Governing Board meeting minutes are available on the web. When necessary, the board may e-mail information out to the entire parent body. If you have suggestions or concerns, please direct them to a teacher, the Site Coordinator, or to the board president. 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 board. All formal grievances should be in writing, explaining the problem clearly and concisely, should include a signature and date, and be presented to the Lead teacher, Site Coordinator or board president. Any of the above can provide a form for this purpose.

Telephone Calls

Students may use the learning center phone during breaks. Calls to the resource center during class hours are routed to voice mail by default. In an emergency, the caller may ring through to the classroom.

Telephone Communication

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

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. Staff cannot administer medication to children without written 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 volunteer head lice coordinator will provide detection and treatment information and resources.

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

Current state law requires your child to be up to date on all required immunizations or have a Medical Exemption from a licensed health care provider on file with us. Please check with your child's physician for the current requirements. Please keep your immunization record or Medical Exemption on file at the Learning Center current.

Emergencies

We have emergency procedures that will be followed 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 will 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 ensure that no child wanders behind a car unnoticed.

We strongly encourage families to form carpools to conserve energy and minimize congestion at drop-off and pick-up time. However, the Learning Center staff must be notified of all carpool 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 their continued success. We ask for your agreement with the following:

I have reviewed the online parent handbook sections describing Caspar Creek's philosophy, policies, and lifestyle recommendations.

I will participate in learning community meetings, parent-teacher conferences, learning community events and activities, fundraisers, help with maintenance projects and work days, and participate in fundraising activities such as raffles and events.

I understand the importance of direct parent donations to the sustainability of Caspar Creek, and will participate in this program to the best of my ability.

I understand the advantages of my child's regular and punctual attendance at provided classes. I understand that it is best that children arrive at the learning center ten to twenty minutes before classes begin, and that they must be picked up promptly at closing time.

I agree to actively communicate with the teachers, and to **read and respond to CCLC email** and other communications in a timely manner.

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

Signature(s):

Child's name(s):

Date signed:

PHOTO RELEASE

☐ Yes ☐ No **I/We agree** that CCLC may periodically create and publish photographs that may include images of my child on our website, in social media or in print publications, in connection with the promotional or fundraising activities of Caspar Creek. _____ (Please Initial)

Please sign and return one copy to your child's teacher, and keep the other for your records.