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## Our School Community

### Our Background

Golden Valley Charter School (GVCS) is a public charter school using the three-fold approach of Waldorf Education Methods. We strive to teach the hands, heart, and head of the children we serve and develop a community of families learning and working together. We opened in September 1999 to forty-five students and have graduated two eighth classes. This fall we expect to have over 240 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The first public Waldorf methods school, the Urban Waldorf School, opened in Milwaukee in 1991. Currently there are several public schools in California and throughout the United States using a curriculum inspired by Waldorf Education.

Subject to the approval of the sponsoring school district, charter schools are free in their choice of educational philosophy and governance procedures and are exempt from a majority of the requirements of the State Education code. Like other public schools, the Charter School qualifies for state education revenues on the basis of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) for the year. However, charter schools must also provide for their own sites from this same source of revenue (lease payments, capital improvements, maintenance, etc). Charter Schools are non-sectarian and non-discriminatory. Parental support and involvement are major components, which contribute to the success of charter schools.

### An Education Based on Child Development

We recognize that each child is a three-fold being: physical, emotional, and intellectual. Unlike traditional public schools where intellectual development is stressed, we educate the whole child by integrating music, art, creative play, practical activities, handwork, storytelling, movement and drama into the teaching of language arts, mathematics, science and social studies.

We also recognize that the child develops in approximately seven-year cycles. During each of these stages the child learns and takes in the world in a different way. Our curriculum is structured to respond to and enhance each of these phases of development. In this way critical thinking skills are developed and the child's true potential is allowed to unfold. Our goal is to help our students develop into adults who can "impart directions to their lives."

### The First Seven Years--Imitation

From birth the child is learning. Uprightness, the acquisition of language and the ability to think are gigantic achievements in a period of three or four years. The child gains them through a combination of latent ability, instinct and above all, *imitation*. The last is the specific talent that characterizes the period up to the age of six or seven; the child mimics everything in the environment uncritically—not only the sounds of speech, the gestures of people (and machines), but the attitudes and values of adults and peers. During this stage the child's physical body is developing at an incredible rate.

### Kindergarten

The kindergarten teacher creates an environment that is worthy of the child's *imitation*. The child is offered plenty of opportunities for meaningful imitation and creative play. This supports the child in the central activity of these early years: the development of the physical organism. Through all the kindergarten activities the child is developing judgment and practical intelligence, which will be critical during later life.

In the kindergarten children play at cooking, they dress up and become mothers and fathers, kings and magicians, they sing, paint and color. Through songs and poems they learn to enjoy language; they learn to play together; hear stories, see puppet shows, bake bread, make soup, model beeswax, build houses out of cloths and wooden play stands.

To become fully engaged in such work is the child's best preparation for life. It builds powers of concentration, interest, and a life-long love of learning.

### **The Heart of Childhood—Imagination**

When children are ready to leave kindergarten and enter first grade, they are eager to explore the whole world of experience for the second time. Before, they identified with it and imitated it; now, at a more conscious level, they are ready to know it again, by means of the *imagination*—that extraordinary power of human cognition—which allows us the “see” pictures in our minds.

### **The Grades**

The grades teachers help their students develop their *imagination*, concentration, ability to focus and flexibility of thinking as well as learn subject material through the use of stories, verses, rhythmic activities, tongue twisters, songs, movement, concentration exercises, and artistic activities during the first two hours of each day called the Main Lesson. One subject is explored in depth for a period of three or four weeks. During the Main Lesson the students listen to stories and write and illustrate their own textbooks (main lesson books). After recess there are practice periods during which basic skills previously introduced are practiced and deepened in simulated life experiences. Specialty Subjects, which include form drawing, painting, beeswax modeling, music, flute or recorder, handwork, games, Spanish, and drama complete the curriculum. Please note that the Spanish classes offered at Golden Valley cannot be counted toward high school college-prep Spanish.

Ideally, class teachers continue with their classes from one year to the next. The class teacher and the children get to know each other very well, and it is this teacher who becomes the school's closest link with the parents of that class. This experience of class community is both challenging and deeply rewarding to teachers. Having to prepare new subject matter as their students get older from year to year is a guarantee of a fresh start each year. Children begin to see that a human being can strive for a unity of knowledge and experience.

### **The Home/School Connection**

The family unit is the foundation of Waldorf education that the school can only augment. This is why the teachers at Golden Valley Charter School feel it is essential that the home support and complement what we are striving to achieve in the classroom. The child's need for rhythm, good nutrition, and sensory protection is of utmost importance. Children who are protected from the sights and sounds of media, fed wholesome food, and provided with daily and weekly rhythms at home will truly benefit from the rich language of the stories and artistic activities they experience at school. Let us look at some of the ways family life can support the educational program at GVCS.

#### **Nutrition**

Provide your child with a healthy, well balanced diet rich in grains, protein, fruits and vegetables and low in processed foods, fats and sugar. Processed foods with dyes and flavor enhancers have been known to create many allergies in children. Often hyperactive or attention deficit disorder children are simply allergic to certain foods they are eating. Nutrition is foremost in helping a child create living energy that develops the body in a positive way.

#### **Technology/Media**

Due to the known negative effects that media has on child development and a child's ability to take in the Waldorf methods curriculum, we request that our parents eliminate or limit their children's media/technology use such as computer, radio, video, CD, TV, MP 3 players (iPod) and movies. By doing this, the children's minds are left open to take in the rich curriculum they experience each day at school. (Please see our Media Policy for more specific information.)

#### **Rhythm/Rest**

Providing your children with daily rhythms, such as regular chores and set meal and bed times within your daily and weekly schedules will enable them to develop self-discipline and the sense of security they will take into their adult lives. In this modern world our lives have become so busy and hectic that we sometimes forget that we all need “down time in order to breathe”. Also, children who are well rested come to school able to concentrate and work. Children often need nine to eleven hours of sleep a night, depending on their age.

## Fundraising/Golden Valley Educational Foundation

The Golden Valley Educational Foundation (GVEF) has been established to financially support our school. As you know, the California State budget shortfall is affecting all public schools in California; and we are no exception. In order to continue to provide a rich program inspired by Waldorf Education to our students, GVEF sponsors fundraising events, writes grants to private educational foundations and requests that families to donate \$100 per month per child to supplement Golden Valley Charter School's operating budget.

## In Conclusion

This is a very short summary of each of these topics. We encourage you to find out more about each of them and Waldorf Education in general. As a parent of a GVCS student you will have many opportunities to learn and share experiences; through class meetings, parent/teacher conferences, Parent Education Lectures, conversations with fellow parents at community events, and also at classes offered within the greater community. In the meantime, please visit our Web site [.goldenvalleycharter.org](http://goldenvalleycharter.org).

1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
<b>Language Arts</b>	<b>Language Arts</b>	<b>Language Arts</b>	<b>Language Arts</b>	<b>Language Arts</b>	<b>Language Arts</b>	<b>Language Arts</b>	<b>Language Arts</b>
* writing	*reading	*reading	*grammar	*narrative writing	*essay writing	*biography	*biography
* reading	*writing	*composition	*drama	*report writing	*out-lining	*drama	*short stories
* fairy tales	*legends	*grammar	*Norse myths	*grammar	*creative writing	*essay writing	*creative writing
<b>Mathematics</b>	*fables	*letter writing	*report writing	*Greek mythology	*narrative writing	*Arthurian Legends	<b>Mathematics</b>
* add./subtraction.	*grammar	*Hebrew	*business letter	<b>Mathematics</b>	*grammar	<b>Mathematics</b>	*Algebra
* multiplication./div.	<b>Mathematics</b>	legends	*narrative writing	*decimals	*Roman mythology	*Geometry	*Geometry
<b>Form Drawing</b>	*add./subtraction	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	*geometry	<b>Mathematics</b>	*Into Algebra	<b>Social Studies</b>
<b>Spanish</b>	*multi./div.	*memorize	*long division	*prime numbers	*ratio	<b>Social Studies</b>	*US & Modern
<b>Beeswax</b>	<b>Form Drawing</b>	multi. facts	*multiplication	<b>Social Studies</b>	*business math	*Age of Discovery	History
<b>Modeling</b>	<b>Spanish</b>	*measurement	*estimation	*Ancient Civilizations	*Geometry	*Renaissance	*World Geography
<b>Painting</b>	<b>Painting</b>	*money	*fractions	*Greek History	<b>Social Studies</b>	History	*Economics
<b>Knitting</b>	<b>Knitting</b>	*long multi.	<b>Social Studies</b>	*US Geography	*Roman History	*World Geography	<b>Science</b>
<b>Flutes</b>	<b>Beeswax</b>	*division	*CA history	<b>Science</b>	*Medieval History	<b>Science</b>	*Physics
<b>Games</b>	<b>modeling</b>	w/remainder	& geography	*Botany	*World	*Physics	*Mechanics
<b>Drama</b>	<b>Games</b>	<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Spanish</b>	Geography	*Chemistry	*Physiology
	<b>Drama</b>	*cooking	*Zoology	<b>Painting</b>	<b>Science</b>	*Astronomy	<b>Spanish</b>
		*building	<b>Spanish</b>	<b>Handwork</b>	*Astronomy	*Physiology	<b>Sewing</b>
		*clothing	<b>Painting</b>	<b>Recorder</b>	*Geology	<b>Spanish</b>	<b>Painting</b>
		<b>Spanish</b>	<b>Needlework</b>	<b>Games</b>	*Physics	<b>Sewing</b>	<b>Drawing</b>
		<b>Gardening</b>	<b>Recorder</b>	<b>Drama</b>	<b>Spanish</b>	<b>Painting</b>	<b>Recorder</b>
		<b>Painting</b>	<b>Games</b>		<b>Handwork</b>	<b>Perspective</b>	<b>Choral Singing</b>
		<b>Crocheting</b>	<b>Drama</b>		<b>Recorder</b>	drawing	<b>Gardening</b>
		<b>Recorder</b>			<b>Painting</b>	<b>Recorder</b>	<b>Games</b>
		<b>Games</b>			<b>Drawing</b>	<b>Choral Singing</b>	<b>Drama</b>
		<b>Drama</b>			<b>Games</b>	<b>Gardening</b>	
					<b>Drama</b>	<b>Games</b>	
						<b>Drama</b>	