

**Walden Center & School**  
**Family Handbook**  
**2023-2024**



**Walden Center & School**  
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“The educational philosophy of Walden has stood up over the years...an alternative school based on the real experience of children in the arts, in working towards a better environment, towards peace, and towards strong personal relationships with their teachers and each other.”

– Founder Lee McRae, Currents, 1996

**Welcome to Walden!** This handbook presents our philosophy, policies, and procedures for the 2023-2024 school year.

Walden Center & School is a member of Bay Area Directors of Admission (BADA)/ Independent Schools of the San Francisco Bay Area (ISSFBA)

**Walden’s tax ID number is 94-1464735.**

Walden Center and School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its admission policies, financial aid programs, employment policies, or other school-administered programs.

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# OUR MISSION

Walden Center & School is an independent, K-6 school where drama, music, and art sit alongside traditional academic subjects as our core curriculum. Walden's philosophy of education incorporates the following principles:

## **Integrating Arts and Academics**

Artistic expression is an essential element of every child's education.

## **Engaging the Whole Child**

Children learn best when their academic, emotional, physical, and social needs are addressed concurrently.

## **Seeing Children as Individuals**

In designing and implementing curricula, we take an individualized approach in order to meet each child where he or she is developmentally.

## **Teaching as a Collective**

The teachers run the school, which provides them with autonomy and flexibility in the classroom and direct participation in school-wide decision making.

# CALENDAR AND SCHEDULES

Walden coordinates our calendar with that of the Berkeley Unified School District with a few exceptions. Our Academic Calendar is included here, Schoolcues (administration portal), and on our website. Other school events are posted on our Walden Google Calendar, *Walden Community* (family portal), and upcoming events posted in our weekly newsletter.

## FIRST DAY

Lower Group's first day of school is a short day on Wednesday, when they have the campus all to themselves for a full tour and a meet and greet with all the staff and teachers. Then Thursday, all the students return for a full day of classes, and EDC is open.

Dates to remember during the school year are listed in the Walden Calendar, available as a PDF and through calendar subscription. Events are added year-round. Upcoming events, changes to the calendar and new events are posted in the Walden News and Community.

## DAILY SCHEDULE

### **Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday**

8:45-Academic/Arts (9:15 for LG)  
10:30- Recess  
11:00-Academic/Arts  
12:00-Lunch  
1:00-Academic/Arts  
1:55- Recess (LMG-UG only)  
2:30- LG dismissal  
3:00- Dismissal for LMG-UG

### **Wednesday (Early Dismissal)**

8:45-Academic/Arts  
10:30- Recess  
11:00-Academic/Arts  
12:00-Lunch  
12:45-Academic/Arts  
2:00- Dismissal for all LG-UG

Supervision is provided for Lower Group students at 8:45 a.m. on school days. This provides Lower Group children with 30 minutes for conversation, playing, or quiet time before class begins. This is especially helpful for high-energy children or others needing some transition time before class begins.

Daily class schedules vary, depending on the weekly arts schedule, field trips, current units of study, and projects in progress.

## TEACHER WORKDAYS AND CONFERENCE DAYS

There are three Teacher Workdays and four Parent/Teacher Conference Days during the school year. On these days, classes are not in session. Please check the calendar for the childcare / EDC schedule on these days.

## **EARLY DISMISSAL DAYS**

School is dismissed at 2:00 p.m. every Wednesday for staff meetings. For this year, as we transition to this new schedule, there is courtesy EDC from 2:00-2:45p on these days.

# WALDEN ACADEMIC CALENDAR: 2023 - 2024

School year begins, ends	Early Dismissal days (2pm)	School closed – EDC closed	No classes, EDC Open
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	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Key dates	Description
<b>Aug</b>		1	2	3	4	8/5	LG picnic 11-1PM
	7	8	9	10	11	8/12 & 8/13	Back-to-School Work Weekend
	14	15	16	17	18	8/19 & 8/20	Staff Meetings 9-3PM, Back-to-School Work Weekend
	21	22	23	24	25	8/23 & 8/24	First Day LG-short day, First Day of School
<b>Sept</b>	28	29	30	31	1		
	4	5	6	7	8	9/4	Labor Day Holiday
	11	12	13	14	15		
	18	19	20	21	22		
	25	26	27	28	29		
<b>Oct</b>	2	3	4	5	6		
	9	10	11	12	13	10/9	Indigenous peoples day
	16	17	18	19	20		
	23	24	25	26	27		
<b>Nov</b>	30	31	1	2	3	11/1	Teacher Work Day
	6	7	8	9	10	11/8 & 11/10	No staff meeting, CONFERENCE PREP, Parent/Teacher conf
	13	14	15	16	17	11/13	Parent/Teacher conf DAY
	20	21	22	23	24		Nov Break
<b>Dec</b>	27	28	29	30	1		
	4	5	6	7	8		
	11	12	13	14	15		
	18	19	20	21	22	12/18-12/31	Winter Break
	25	26	27	28	29		
<b>Jan</b>	1	2	3	4	5	1/1	New Year's Day observed
	8	9	10	11	12		
	15	16	17	18	20	1/15	Dr. MLK, Jr. Day



	22	23	24	25	26		
<b>Feb</b>	29	30	31	1	2		
	5	6	7	8	9		
	12	13	14	15	16		
	19	20	21	22	23	2/19 & 2/20-2/23	Presidents Day Holiday, February Break
	26	27	28	29	1		
	4	5	6	7	8		
	11	12	13	14	15	3/13 & 3/14	No staff meeting, CONFERENCE PREP, Family/Teacher conf
	18	19	20	21	22	3/19	Parent/Teacher conf DAY
	25	26	27	28	29	3/29	Grandparents- Special Friends Day- 12:00 dismissal, no EDC
<b>April</b>	1	2	3	4	5	4/1-4/5	Spring Break
	8	9	10	11	12		
	15	16	17	18	19		
	22	23	24	25	26		
<b>May</b>	29	30	1	2	3		
	6	7	8	9	10		
	13	14	15	16	17	5/18	Spring Fair
	20	21	22	23	24	2/20	Teacher work Day
	27	28	29	30	31	5/27	Memorial Day
<b>June</b>	3	4	5	6	7	6/7	Last day of school. 12:00 dismissal, no EDC
	10	11	12	13	14		Staff Meetings

# ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL PROCEDURE

## GATES

The only gate Walden will be using for students or family members entering and exiting the campus is the “new” wooden gate on McKinley, which for this notice is being referred to as

the “front entrance.” The other black metal gate on McKinley (near the basketball hoop) and the one on Dwight Way will no longer be used for student arrival or dismissal.

## **MORNING ARRIVAL TIMING**

Please enter through the front entrance on McKinley. Grown-ups are welcome to enter campus too. From 7:45 am to 8:35am, students entering campus are signed into morning EDC. From 8:35 to 8:45 am students are welcome on campus and do not need to sign in to EDC (school officially begins at 8:45 am).

## **AFTERNOON DISMISSAL TIMING:**

### **Lower Group Dismissal:**

At 2:15pm (M,T, Th, F) Lower Group grown-ups are welcome to enter campus through the main gate and wait outside the Lower Group Classroom for the LG student dismissal at 2:30 pm. Any student not picked up at that time will be taken to the EDC staff. Lower groupers get courtesy EDC for 40 minutes and EDC check in begins at 3:10.

### **LMG, MG & UG Dismissal:**

Students will be dismissed directly from the classrooms, and not walked to the gate - they will head to EDC or to the adults on campus to pick them up. Teachers will monitor the front entrance for students expecting to be picked up there. Here are the specifics:

- 2:45 pm (M,T, Th, F) - Parents and guardians are welcome to enter campus through the front entrance in preparation for the 3:00 pm dismissal.
- 3:00 pm Dismissal - Students will be dismissed from classrooms to EDC or their parents and guardians who are on campus. One staff member will monitor the front entrance to facilitate any pick-ups that happen there (in this scenario, families need to have communicated to their student in advance to meet them at the gate). The staff member(s) at the front entrance will not retrieve kids who are not waiting at the gate. In that situation, adults will need to park and come on campus to get their student(s).
- 3:10 pm: Front entrance will be closed, and students are officially signed in to EDC. Students who have an adult family member present do not need to sign into EDC yet.
- 3:30 pm: ALL students on campus are signed into EDC (even if their parent is present - this means those students and parents may remain on campus but they are charged for EDC starting at 3:30p).

## **EARLY DISMISSAL WEDNESDAYS:**

Campus is open at 1:45 pm for parents to enter in preparation for dismissal at 2:00 pm. *For this 2023-2024 school year only*, EDC sign in is at 2:45 (ALL students on campus will be signed in - same as above - even when their parents are present).

## **EARLY PICKUP, ALTERNATE PICK-UP PERSON AND GOING HOME WITH SOMEONE ELSE**

This year we are also using SchoolCues as a communication portal for families to report early pick-up and pick-up from an adult not on your child's approved list.

ONLINE: SchoolCues Home > Quick Access Menu > Permission Forms

APP: Quick Access Menu (bottom right) > Permission Forms

- Gold Communication Form:
  - Notification of Alternate PickUp Person - If your student will be picked up by someone NOT on their authorized pick-up list.
  - The first time a new person or a non-walden affiliated grown-up picks up a student in EDC, we need their first and last name because we check their ID upon pickup.

# WALDEN BASICS

## SCHOOL HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

Walden Foundation, Inc. is a nonprofit organization established in 1958 by families and teachers who shared a common philosophy about their children's education and a desire to participate more directly in it. The founding families and teachers created a small, independent elementary school for children in grades K-6.

The current staff shares an educational philosophy inspired by the founders that values experiential learning, creative and artistic expression, cooperative learning, and an awareness of personal as well as broader community issues.

Since 1959 Walden has been located at 2446 McKinley Avenue, Berkeley, a site owned by and developed specifically for the school. Walden provides a non-sectarian, multicultural learning environment. Walden cultivates a community of families, students, and staff that incorporates the racial, ethnic, and economic diversity of the East Bay community.

Families support the functioning of the school and thus enrich their family's experience of Walden in a wide variety of ways. Some of these are stipulated in the Enrollment and Tuition Agreement, and many are voluntary. The breadth of involvement and the hours spent working together in the pursuit of the common goal of creating the best school experience possible for the children produce a deep sense of community, which extends beyond the physical space of the school, and, often, beyond the years during which a child attends the school.

## ORGANIZATION: COLLECTIVE, FOUNDATION, FINANCE, PERSONNEL

### Philosophy of Governance

Walden's founders were pacifist anarchists. As such, they believed strongly in decentralized organizational structures and the importance of creating an environment where every voice could be heard and listened to. Their goal was a governance structure that modeled positive and peaceful decision-making and conflict resolution for children and the entire community.

That legacy lives on in Walden's collective structure and the role of consensus in policy and decision-making, as well as in Walden's educational philosophy. Teachers work collectively to oversee the day-to-day running of the school and use a consensus model to reach decisions. Not only does this allow for every voice to be heard, it ensures that multiple viewpoints can be considered.

Walden's board of trustees is the Walden Foundation, composed of Walden staff, current and former families, and alumni. Like the Collective, the Foundation follows a consensus

decision-making model. The Foundation is responsible for the fiscal health of the school, safety, and Walden's philosophical underpinnings. The Collective and the Foundation work side by side in a nonhierarchical structure.

## **The Collective**

The Walden Collective is responsible for running the day-to-day aspects of the school. The Walden Collective is made up of classroom and arts teachers, the administrative coordinator, the admissions and EDC coordinator. Using a consensus decision-making model, they oversee the day-to-day operations at Walden, planning and implementing the educational programs, designing the curriculum, and making hiring decisions. They collectively enroll students, define class groups, develop curricula, evaluate teachers, and communicate with families. The Collective meets weekly to plan class activities, review student progress, and discuss long-term plans.

## **The Walden Foundation**

The Foundation oversees the financial, physical, and philosophical health of the school. The Foundation, composed of Walden staff, current and former families, and alumni, is ultimately responsible for major financial and policy decisions. The Foundation meets monthly during the school year and makes decisions by consensus.

*Current Members: Winona Alexander, Jeff Grether, Debra Wong, Harley Goldstrom, Dov Pollack, Joline Barsanti, Sarah Woodson, Lily Jones,*

## **The Finance Committee**

The Finance Committee makes recommendations and decisions about all Walden financial matters, including financial aid, tuition, and budgets. The committee is made up of the Walden Business Manager, two or more Walden Collective members, and current and former Walden community members. Non-staff members provide valuable professional and personal perspectives to advocate for Walden families' needs around financial matters and communication.

*Current Members: Joline Barsanti, Debra Wong, Jeff Grether, Alix Feinsod, Jaclyn Harr, David Anthoff*

## **The Personnel Committee**

The Personnel Committee is charged with formally addressing and administering the personnel rules and policies of the school. The committee is made up of two or more Collective members and a non-Collective Foundation member. The committee is responsible for addressing concerns about a teacher's performance and instances of discrimination and harassment.

*Current members: Gina Centanni, Winona Alexander, Dov Pollack, Sarah Woodson*

# TEACHERS & STAFF CONTACTS

(These new updated email addresses will be active after September 11, 2023!)

## CLASSROOM TEACHERS

### Lower Group:

Gina Centanni,  
[gina@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:gina@waldencenterschool.org)

### Lower Middle Group:

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### Middle Group:

Emma Ammirati,  
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Andrew Patel,  
[andrew@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:andrew@waldencenterschool.org)

### Upper Group:

Jeff Grether,  
[jeff@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:jeff@waldencenterschool.org)  
Alix Feinsod,  
[alix@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:alix@waldencenterschool.org)

## ARTS AND LANGUAGE TEACHERS

### Visual Arts:

Ruth Bosco,  
[ruth@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:ruth@waldencenterschool.org)

### Music:

Carlos Cadena,  
[carlos@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:carlos@waldencenterschool.org)

### Movement/Drama:

Skyler Sullivan  
[skyler@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:skyler@waldencenterschool.org)

### Spanish:

Lee Ann Parker,  
[leeann@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:leeann@waldencenterschool.org)

### Sign Language:

Pam Johnson,  
[pjay@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:pjay@waldencenterschool.org)

## ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

### Administrative Coordinator:

Claudine Swickard,  
[claudine@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:claudine@waldencenterschool.org)

### Admissions Coordinator,

Winona Alexander,  
[winona@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:winona@waldencenterschool.org)  
[admissions@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:admissions@waldencenterschool.org)

### Business Manager:

Joline Barsanti,  
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### Web and Social Media Coordinator:

Christy Bradshaw,  
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### News Editor and Roster:

Debra Wong,  
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[roster@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:roster@waldencenterschool.org)

## EXTENDED DAY CARE PROGRAM (EDC)

### EDC Coordinator

Winona Alexander,  
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### Staff

Erin Paxson,  
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Micah Rolph,  
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### Assistants

Erin Paxson,  
[erin@waldencenterschool.com](mailto:erin@waldencenterschool.com)  
Lee Ann Parker,  
[leeann@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:leeann@waldencenterschool.org)

## EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

**Learning Specialist:** Michele Adamson,  
(Contact Emma)

# EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Walden teachers share a basic educational philosophy that respects the integrity of the individual child. Classrooms are child-centered, which promotes and reflects teachers' attention to the needs and interests of the children. The school environment enhances each child's academic, social, creative, emotional, and physical growth. We encourage extensive use of the outdoor space at Walden, and appreciate the value of play for children.

Every group of children brings a unique mix of backgrounds, interests, and special needs that help contribute to curriculum planning.

## CLASSROOM GROUPINGS

Walden has a maximum enrollment of 96 students. The student/teacher ratio ranges from 8:1 to 16:1, depending on the class and activity. Children progress through four major groups that include overlapping ages and grades.

- The Lower Group, ages 5-6, is taught by one classroom teacher.\*
- The Lower-Middle Group, ages 6-8, is taught by one classroom teacher.
- The Middle Group, ages 7-9, is team-taught by two classroom teachers.
- The Upper Group, ages 9-12, is team-taught by two classroom teachers.

\*Families have the option of enrolling 4-year-olds who will engage in a modified TK curriculum alongside their 5- and 6-year old peers. Those younger students will then continue for a second year of Lower Group.

## ACADEMICS

There are certain learning experiences which we value enough for children to have each year at Walden. These experiences, whether cooperative group games or manipulative-based math, will build on the previous year's experiences and ensure continuity.

- Daily class meetings
- Writing journals and book publishing
- Arts and academics presented within an interdisciplinary approach
- Map skills/geography
- Literature-based reading programs, with integrated phonics and phonemic awareness activities in the early grades
- Hands-on math and physical science
- Natural science with a focus on sustainability
- Integration of multicultural perspectives in all areas of study
- Cooperative learning groups
- Conflict resolution skills
- Activities to promote and nurture self-esteem
- Mixed-age activities, including buddies, Spirit Week, Science Week, Book Week, and all-school assemblies and celebrations

- Field trips/overnight trips
- Physical development activities
- Thematic science and social studies units

## **Language Arts**

Children at Walden learn to appreciate literature from many cultures in a program that combines reading, creative writing, and phonemic awareness to help children master essential literacy skills. Children keep journals each year and create original stories, some of which are later revised, edited, and published into individual books or class collections. Older children participate in book discussions that examine complex novels in terms of plot, theme, and character, while continuing to improve their skills in creative and expository writing. They regularly share their love of literature through the Reading Buddies program, in which older students read favorite books to younger students. During our yearly Book Week, the whole school community celebrates authors, illustrators, and the art of bookmaking

## **Mathematics**

In our hands-on, problem-solving approach, math is presented as a tool for everyday life. Children in each class work individually and cooperatively to solve math problems. Younger students explore quantity, pattern, and shape through building with manipulatives. These early discoveries translate into the recognition and description of those same attributes when working with abstract numbers. Older children develop skills in computation and mental math while working with increasingly complex mathematical concepts. Using a wide variety of resources, teachers design the curriculum to combine grade-level expectations with developmentally appropriate units of study.

## **Science**

We begin our program of scientific inquiry by building on children's natural curiosity about the world around them. At the end of each school year, classroom teachers ask children what they want to study the following year. Because of this input from students, classroom teachers are able to organize units that are certain to be of high interest to their classes. Across the science program, children of all ages learn to ask questions, form hypotheses, experiment, observe, and draw conclusions. Older students collect and analyze data within larger units of study. These exciting units support child-centered learning, covering the areas of life, and physical, and environmental sciences. Our annual Science Week culminates in a science fair display of original experiments, designed and implemented by students in 1st through 6th grade.

## **Social Studies**

Social studies is about a person's place in the world, beginning with a child's relationship to self and expanding outward from family, school, and community to cities, states, and nations. We create and teach social studies units and themes based on the interests of the students, which means kids engage with the material in personally meaningful ways. We use hands-on activities, stories, role-playing, and field trips to bring lessons to life. In addition, social studies, which include history, anthropology, geography, civics, and citizenship, are a natural place to integrate literature, music, dance, and art. A key focus throughout the grades is learning about and honoring different familial and cultural



traditions. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse world. Social justice, anti-racism, and anti-bias are integral aspects of social studies.

## **THE ARTS**

Music, movement/drama, and visual arts teachers work with the children in all groups twice a week. Arts and classroom teachers collaborate in integrating the arts with other aspects of the educational program.

### **Visual Arts**

Art involves mind, feelings and fine motor abilities. The Visual Arts program helps children to explore, discover and express visually, encouraging and inspiring flexible thinking, curiosity, safety, self-knowledge, respect and celebration of the wide difference of expressions and interpretations among students.

The program encourages the use of imagination, inquiries and humor, to excite and expand children's interest in exploring materials, cultures, techniques, stimulating the ability to challenge themselves and facilitating each child's development in community.

Classroom curriculum, personal and age-related themes are given, taking children's input at the end of each school year. Over the years at Walden students do painting, drawing, collage, assemblage, clay sculpture and pottery, plaster, mixed-media projects, printing, sewing, bookmaking and stop motion movie making. Children develop and enhance their skills as they grow.

In Art there are no mistakes, just opportunities to work and think in a different way. The art room is a safe space for exploration and expression. Children work individually and in collaboration and they all nurture each other sharing the Art Room.

### **Drama and Movement**

Drama and movement at Walden are designed to unlock each child's sense of creativity, collaboration, and confidence. Each year the children participate in a series of developmentally appropriate tasks and challenges that enhance their abilities to express themselves through movement, voice, and the imagination. Drawing on many forms of performing arts, we will explore: acting, dance, creative movement, physical comedy, mime, acrobatics, and improvisation. Creating an ensemble is a building block of our approach, meaning the groups will work on how to be a supportive entity, who share ideas and are able to create material together and are comfortable with taking creative risks.

Honoring diverse perspectives will inform our course of study, and we will uplift and reflect our intersected community, in structures, stories, and points of view.

### **Music**

Walden's music program fosters the involvement of the whole child in the joy of making music with others. A learning and teaching approach known around the world as Orff-Schulwerk inspires the program. It combines music, movement, speech, and play. It develops musical learning through activities that children naturally love to do: sing, chant rhymes and poetry, clap, dance, keep a beat, play games, tell stories and create rhythm on all kinds of objects. Children learn to utilize, and later to understand, the many elements of musical expression—melody, harmony, rhythm, form, texture, timbre, dynamics, etc.—and many begin to read and write music when they are motivated to write down what they have created. Walden's studio provides a spacious and flexible environment for

musical creativity and is equipped with an extensive collection of carefully selected, child-accessible musical instruments. Children listen, create and perform materials both original and traditional from diverse cultures throughout the world. Each child contributes according to individual readiness and ability, and each child discovers unique measures of success.

## **LANGUAGES**

### **Spanish**

The Spanish program uses a mixture of songs, games, and experiential activities as well as oral and written exercises. The children become increasingly familiar with the language and Spanish speaking cultures as they progress through the school. Throughout the Spanish curriculum at Walden, there is an emphasis placed on the importance of learning another language to help us understand one another, to expand our horizons and to open doors to other ways of thinking and being. Learning another language expands our brains and hopefully instills some compassion and understanding of what it is to be from somewhere else.

### **Sign Language**

American Sign Language is a class provided to Lower and Lower Middle groups. Taught by a native signer(coda), it expands the world view of spoken languages to include domestic American Sign Language and makes everyone a member of SLP "Sign Language People\*".

Storytelling, handshape use, vocabulary building and last but not least, the signed alphabet are utilized to engage all. Welcome to "Eye-land!"-a visual landscape where we travel by hand for fun learning and excitement. It is where one gains appreciation of cultural growth, understanding and diversity.

Sign Language builds imitation skills, increases interaction and provides input in a visual way that aids development of spoken language quicker. It is said to contribute to a Higher IQ than those peers who do not know signs. Sign Language is catching on in school curriculums everywhere and Walden is ahead of the wave by well over a decade. Come catch the wave!

\*SLP sign language people is a phrase coined by Deaf leader and historian Paddy Lang.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Families and teachers work collaboratively to set academic, social, and emotional goals for each child. Instead of using standardized tests, teachers assess children informally on a daily basis. Teachers communicate student growth and progress at fall and spring conferences with families and as needed throughout the year. These meetings are held in lieu of report cards. They provide opportunities for discussion of each child's academic progress, social growth, and emotional development.

## **LEARNING SUPPORT**

Special needs and referrals are addressed in conferences and are part of an ongoing conversation between teachers and families. Although teachers meet a wide range of children's needs, on occasion a child may require special evaluation and help. In such cases, teachers meet with parents to make appropriate recommendations and referrals. Teachers expect families to act upon referrals in a timely manner. Failure to do so may jeopardize a child's continuance at Walden.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Day trips broaden classroom learning by offering first-hand experiences and observation. The classes take regular field trips to the Berkeley Public Library, facilities at UC Berkeley, and other local resources, such as the Lawrence Hall of Science, East Bay Regional Parks, the Bay Area Discovery Museum, and Año Nuevo State Reserve.

Overnight trips are a Walden tradition. Each year classroom teachers decide on a destination, often based on a unit of study (e.g. Marine mammals, tide pools, astronomy). Youth hostels, nature centers, and campgrounds are popular sites. The children, families, and teachers are involved in trip preparations. An overnight trip fee is billed separately on the tuition statements; the amount depends on the particulars of the class trip, ranging from \$75 - \$225.

### **Drivers and Chaperone Guidelines**

Parents and other adults who are helping to drive must leave a copy of their driver's license and proof of liability insurance coverage with the administrative coordinator before heading out on a field trip. Grown-ups on trips are expected to follow the school's guidelines for trips, and not make any unscheduled stops.

# COMMUNICATIONS

Communication is key! We want to make sure that you have all the information you need about school events at Walden, so we have a variety of tools for letting you know what's what.

## ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

### Walden News and Announcements

We use an email platform called Constant Contact to send nonurgent official school business including the weekly Walden news and other official announcements from the Collective, Foundation, and Finance Committee. *The Walden News* is the most comprehensive place to get school news and announcements so that you can always be aware of upcoming events. It will appear every Friday in your email feed. Email [news@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:news@waldencenterschool.org) if you have items to be included by Thursday evening.

### School Cues

Our administration portal, Schoolcues, has a communication tool which includes email and text notifications. We use this communication tool for urgent official school business only, such as school closures and other emergencies. Schoolcues is both a web portal and an app that you can access on your phone or your laptop.

### Walden Community

Here is where you will get regular updates specific to your child's classroom including class newsletters. You will have a chance to chime in with your own questions and thoughts, carry on discussions with other families and otherwise hob-nob with your teachers and other community members. You can control and set up which groups you are a part of and how you receive email notifications whenever there is a new posting. \*Note: if you use GMAIL, email notifications from Community may appear under the tabs: "social," "forums" or others - depending on how you have set up your gmail preferences.

### Direct emails

We will use direct emails for direct teacher-to-family communication and you may do the same.

**IMPORTANT!** The email you enter in Schoolcues will be used for all four of these communication tools in the Fall. However, if you change your email in SchoolCues or Community mid-year, please also notify: [roster@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:roster@waldencenterschool.org)

# **IN-PERSON COMMUNICATIONS**

## **Back-to-School Nights**

Each class schedules their back to school night near the beginning of the year for each class to provide parents and caregivers with information about curriculum, educational philosophy, and particular class plans.

## **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Parent/ Teacher Conferences are scheduled twice a year in the fall and spring. Walden considers each child's education a unique journey. Within the context of individual development, teachers have expectations about each child's emotional, social, and academic progress. During parent/teacher conferences your child's academic work, peer relationships, and ongoing social and emotional development are discussed. Families and teachers may mutually arrange other conference times.

## **Flyers**

Hardcopy flyers and reminders about all-school events such as meetings, irregular schedules, and special events are posted on the front gates and the bulletin boards near them.

# **SAFETY AND HEALTH**

## **EMERGENCY AND MEDICAL FORMS**

All families receive an Emergency Form and a Medical Form on SchoolCues to fill out prior to the beginning of the school year. Families need to fill these out completely and clearly before leaving their child at school in August. We do not allow attendance without the submission of these forms. Information must be kept current. Please make changes on the office copy of these forms and notify Walden's Admissions Coordinator, Winona Alexander when doing so.

## **IMMUNIZATIONS**

Walden is required to keep and report student immunization status to the California Department of Public Health. This data is inputted through SchoolCues.

## **MAJOR EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

Walden has specific procedures for major emergencies, such as earthquakes and fires. Please do not attempt to phone the school in the event of a major disaster. We will be involved in the supervision and care of your children, and the phone lines may be tied up.

The Emergency Preparedness Committee maintains a stockpile of food and emergency first aid supplies on site. In addition, each classroom has an earthquake kit which includes flashlights, radios, a complete set of emergency forms and comforting letters provided by families. These letters will be given to the children if conditions necessitate a long separation between family and child. Please be sure to provide an up-to-date comforting letter to your child's teacher every year your child attends Walden.

## **TRAFFIC AND PARKING**

Morning drop-off is a congested time, especially 8:30–9:00 a.m. Please note that the space in front of the school on McKinley Avenue is designated as a Drop Zone and no-parking zone during that time. If you need to walk your child to the school gate, please park elsewhere. After 9:00 a.m. This area is a 20- minute parking zone.

For the safety of the children, and as a courtesy to our neighbors and other families, please avoid double-parking, making U-turns, jaywalking, or blocking driveways when arriving or dropping off your child.

## LUNCH AND SNACKS

Every school day, children need to bring a morning snack as well as a nutritious lunch. If your child stays after school, you may want to pack extra food. Please do not send glass containers to school.

## PETS

Please do not bring pets onto the Walden campus at any time. Similarly, pets must not be brought to off-site Walden events such as picnics, day trips, or overnight trips. Service Animals are welcome.

## ATTENDANCE

### TARDINESS AND ABSENCES

Please notify the school ten minutes before the school day begins if your child is going to be late or absent using the SchoolCues website or app.

If your child has a communicable disease, (e.g. Chicken pox, strep throat, conjunctivitis, pinworms, etc.) please additionally notify the office immediately.

ONLINE: SchoolCues Home > Quick Access Menu > Permission Forms

APP: Quick Access Menu (bottom right) > Permission Forms

- Absentee Form: Report Absences / Early Pickup:
  - Submit a form to report a student's absence for one or more days.
  - Indicate an absence for part of the day or an early pick up
  - add more info in the "Reason" tab.
- Tardy Form:
  - Let teachers know if your child will be late to school due to appointments
  - give teachers a heads up if your student is having a challenging morning.

All students are expected to be in their classrooms on time. It is important for everyone to get off to a good start in the morning and participate in the first activities of the day. It is best to arrive five minutes before the classroom opens in order to say goodbye and help children make the transition into the beginning of the school day. Teachers work hard to plan and implement curriculum, and create interesting and well-organized classrooms.



Welcoming late students and catching them up on information they have missed puts an additional demand on teachers and the students who arrive on time. Grown-ups are responsible for the timely arrival of their children. Unless informed otherwise, the staff assumes that every student will arrive on time every day.

## **PLANNED ABSENCES**

Please discuss planned absences for medical appointments and extended trips well in advance. This helps teachers and families work with the child around missed school activities. Please remember that because we provide a hands-on learning environment, much of the work that children do in class cannot be easily reproduced outside the classroom.

## **HEALTH AND ILLNESS**

Sick children should not be at school. Please keep your child at home if they have a temperature above 99 degrees, have vomited in the night, or are noticeably under the weather. Children may return when they have been fever and symptom-free for 24 hours. Additionally, parents are responsible for checking their children for COVID symptoms every morning before coming to school. If symptoms exist, please keep your child home, and get a COVID test. A negative test is required to return to school. If a child has symptoms at school or they develop during the day, families will be phoned and asked to pick up the student. We have rapid tests that we can administer at school, and if you have signed the form, we will do a rapid test and a PCR test, while we wait for you to pick up your child.

## **LICE POLICY**

If lice or nits are found on a child's head, the school will contact the child's parent or caregiver who must then treat the child's head for lice before sending them back to school. If the child continues to exhibit symptoms of a lice infestation, the school will again notify the family and the child will need to be treated again.

Getting rid of lice generally requires repeat treatments (since no current approved pediculicide is completely effective against nits) and other supplemental measures (such as the use of a nit comb, washing of bedding and headwear, and checking family members and others in close contact for infestation). You can find more extensive information at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website (<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html>).

# **EXTENDED DAY CARE PROGRAM (EDC)**

The EDC direct phone line is 510-841-7221.

The EDC program has its own room and uses many of the facilities on site. An experienced staff offers a variety of special projects, including sports, and arts and crafts. Children have a choice of quiet time or active play in a supervised environment. On regular school days EDC is drop-in.

## **EDC SCHEDULE**

### **Regular EDC Hours**

Morning EDC: 7:45 to 8:35 a.m.

Afternoon EDC: 2:30 to 6:00 p.m.

Early Dismissal EDC- 2:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.

### **Signing Into EDC**

There is a 10-minute grace period before school starts and a 10-minute grace period after school lets out when students do not need to sign in and no charges accrue. Families with a child in the Lower Group receive courtesy EDC until 3:00 p.m.

- Before school, any student who arrives before 8:35 a.m. will be signed into EDC.
- After school all students at 3:10 p.m.
- On early dismissal days (Wednesdays) all students will be signed in at 2:10 p.m. (starting August 2024). For the 2023-2024 school year, Walden is providing courtesy EDC till 2:40 on Wednesdays.

### **Signing out of EDC**

- Grown-ups must come on campus for students to get signed out of EDC. EDC staff sign students out.

### **FULL DAY EDC**

Extended Day Care is available from 7:45 a.m. To 6:00 p.m. during Parent-Teacher Conferences, February and Spring Breaks. Advance sign-up is required for these breaks. If not enough students sign up, then EDC may be canceled. Walden needs a minimum of 6 students to run the program.

### **EDC Closures**

- Federal holidays
- Thanksgiving Week (November 20-24, 2023)
- Winter Break (December 18, 2023- January 1, 2024)
- The Friday afternoon before Spring Break (March 29, 2024)
- The last day of school for the year (June 7, 2024)



# EDC RATES AND BILLING

## Regular EDC Billing Policy

Tuition does not cover the use of EDC. Billed time is calculated from entries made by staff on the EDC ipad.

EDC charges at the following rates:

- \$11.25 per hour for less than 20 hours per family per billing cycle
- \$10.00 per hour for 20 hours or more per billing cycle.
- \$15.00 per hour when children attend all-day EDC days

If a child is signed out after 6:00 p.m., you will be charged a late fee of \$2.00 per minute. This late fee will be included in EDC charges for the month and used to compensate the staff member who stayed late.

## Full-Day EDC Billing Policy

The following policy applies to any All day EDC days. Families need to sign up in advance for the needed EDC hours (partial or whole days). Sign up with EDC staff. There will be a deadline for sign-up.

If the deadline has passed and your family still needs childcare **and** there is room, please speak with Winona Alexander to confirm availability for drop-in care.

Families will be charged the regular All day EDC rate for all hours reserved, whether or not their child attends EDC for all of that time.

If one needs to cancel the reservation after the deadline, there is a \$15.00 fee, if you notify us. If you don't notify us, you are charged for the time you reserved.

**EDC charges must be paid in a timely manner in order for your child to continue using this service.**

# ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL POLICIES

## TUITION AND FEES

Walden's operating funds depend heavily on tuition. Because of the hard work and personal involvement of Walden families we are able to keep tuition lower than other independent schools in the Bay Area. We rely on families to pay tuition on schedule and to provide both physical and operational support. We endeavor to keep our annual tuition increases as low as possible.

Tuition is billed as a deposit due in the spring of the preceding year with the remainder due either as a lump sum or as 9 monthly installments (April through December), which are due, by the 10th of each month. The initial deposit is equal to 10 percent of tuition. In addition, there is an annual supplies fee charged.

## BILLING PROCEDURES

Invoices and statements are dated the 1st of every month. In general invoices and statements will be e-mailed by the 25th of the month preceding the invoice date so that families have 15 days to prepare their payment. For example, invoices dated September 1 are due on September 10 and will be e-mailed to you on August 25. For those who use online banking, please be aware that it typically takes five business days from its initiation date for a check to reach Walden.

Included on your monthly statements will be amounts due for tuition, trip fees, EDC charges, tuition deposits, and late payment and returned check fees. If you owe money for an item not included on your statements, please write a separate check (e.g., photos, Upper Group Play tickets, etc.).

## PAYMENT DUE DATES

It is very important that we receive your payment by the 10th of every month and no later. Your timely payment of invoices is vital to funding payroll and meeting Walden's obligations. We expect all invoices to be paid when due. The only exception will be for families who have made written arrangements with the Business Manager, Joline Barsanti and the Finance Committee. Should you find yourself unable to keep up with payments, it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to contact a member of the Finance Committee, [finance@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:finance@waldencenterschool.org). Failure to contact the committee in a timely manner may jeopardize your child's continuance at Walden.

Payments should be made by either:

1. Pay via your FACTS account by auto pay. If you have any questions about your payment details, you can contact the Business Manager, Joline Barsanti.
2. Mailing to: Walden Center & School, 2446 McKinley Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94703

## LATE FEES

The fee for late payments is \$25. If you have an occasional need to make a late payment, please contact Joline Barsanti, Business Manager, before the 10th of the month to discuss an alternative date and avoid a late fee.

A \$25 fee will be charged for all returned checks.

If you have any questions about your tuition accounts and/or statements, please contact Joline Barsanti: [businessmanager@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:businessmanager@waldencenterschool.org)

## COLLECTION POLICY

1. Payment is expected in full by the due date unless other arrangements have been made in writing with the Finance Committee.
2. A late fee of \$25 will be incurred after the 10th of the month of a missed payment.
3. You will receive an email from the Business Manager 3-5 days after a missed payment.
4. Another email will be sent if no response has been received in the next 2-3 days.
5. A phone call from the Business Manager will occur if there is still no response.
6. If communication has still not happened the Finance Committee will be informed and a letter will be composed to communicate the Walden Collection Policy.
7. If there is still no communication and your account is 60 days in arrears a letter will be composed by the Walden Finance Committee indicating that your child may not return to school until the balance has been addressed.
8. Chronically late payments will result in the following:
  - You will not be able to continue with installment payments. Prepayment of tuition will be required.
  - You will not be eligible for financial aid until the balance is paid in full.
  - You will not be able to re enroll your child until the balance is paid in full.

# WORK COMMITMENT

## REQUIRED HOURS

Work commitment is determined by how many children you have at Walden:

- one child, 50 hours
- two or more children, 75 hours

## Payout Rate

Walden values and relies on your work, and the teachers love how well families take care of our school. We encourage you to find a way to contribute through work commitment. However, if you are unable to do any of the listed jobs, you do have the option of “paying out” which is calculated at \$50.00 x 50 hours (or 75 hours for two children).

- one child, \$2500 hours
- two or more children, \$3750 hours

## PRIMARY WORK COMMITMENT JOB & ASSIGNMENTS

There are a handful of different jobs, but most of the work is in the school’s ongoing care and maintenance. In order for families to get to know the school, and vice versa, in the first two to three years families can expect to be given one of the cleaning jobs. These are: Saturday Work Crew and Midweek Cleaning. These jobs complete less than the 50-hour commitment. Hours not assigned can be fulfilled with complementary hours tasks.

### Saturday Work Crew

A family member comes into Walden for 3 hours (9-12) to do the general custodial work to keep our school clean. Kids can come to these Saturdays, and hang out while a grown-up works. There is no childcare on these Saturdays, so families need to be sure their children are old enough to be independent.

*Saturday Crew fulfills a total of 39 hours of work with a balance of 11 complementary hours. Additional hours and tasks to be recorded in Complementary hours binder*

### Midweek Cleaning team

Each team member comes into Walden once every week for 1 hour to clean one designated area. Tasks are general custodial work to keep our school clean.

*Mid Week clean ups fulfills up to 36 hours of work with a balance of 14 complementary hours. Additional hours and tasks to be recorded in Complementary hours binder*



## COMPLEMENTARY HOURS

If your primary job at Walden does not meet the required 50 hour or 75 hour requirement, you will then be asked to contribute the remaining (complementary) hours. We depend on your complementary hours to get various crucial tasks done throughout the year. Examples of ways you can earn these complementary hours include: organizing classrooms, helping with marketing, fundraising, operations, finance and more. There are also complementary hours available throughout the year in support of events, the Gala, the Winter Frolic, Grandparents and Special Friends Day among others. (Please note: Work weekends and the Spring Fair have separate requirements. See below.) There will be sign-ups sheets available where you can sign up for various jobs we have designated as appropriate for the purposes of meeting your complementary hours requirement.

### **Volunteering vs work commitment:**

Please Note, in addition to your work commitment you will definitely want to participate in other activities at Walden that are purely volunteer: driving on field trips, participating in the Halloween festival, helping in the classroom, volunteering on committees (including Upper Group play) or being a room parent are just a few examples. These more informal, community-building activities are deeply appreciated, however they do not qualify as Work Commitment. If you are unsure of which activities qualify, please check with a Collective member prior to performing the task. (See section, "VOLUNTEERING: BEING INVOLVED AT WALDEN")

### **Recording Hours**

Most work commitment jobs do not require recording hours, the exceptions are Complementary hours, Construction Crew hours, and Garden Crew hours. Hours for those jobs can be recorded as follows:

1. Construction Crew binder in the office.
2. Garden Crew binder in the office.
3. Complementary hours binder in the office: For SATURDAY CREW MEMBERS and MID-WEEK CLEAN-UP folks to record additional hours worked to fulfill total commitment.

The administrative coordinator tracks the hours by checking the binders. If you do not record your hours the administrative coordinator has no way of knowing your hours, and guessing is inaccurate.

For a list of work commitment jobs, see [Appendix C](#).

# **REQUIRED HOURS BEYOND WORK COMMITMENT**

In addition to work commitment, there are 6 hours of support we require of each adult family member each year.

## **BACK-TO-SCHOOL WORK WEEKENDS**

These two weekends are in August. Each parent of a Walden student is asked to work a 4-hour shift to help get the campus ready for the new year. Families and teachers work together. Lots of jobs include chemicals, tools, paints, etc. This is the one time we ask that children are not allowed. The back-to-school work weekends happen once a year, and are different from and in addition to the Work Commitment job "Saturday Work Crew."

## **SPRING FAIR**

The Spring Fair is an incredible community-organized fundraising event that happens every May. While the event has a main organizer, it cannot be put on without the support of Walden families! We ask each adult in your family to put in 2 hours before, during, or after the Spring Fair in support of this wonderful, homegrown event. Hours beyond these required 2 may be counted toward complementary hours if needed, or as volunteering.

# **VOLUNTEERING: BEING INVOLVED AT WALDEN**

Get involved to help build the type of community that children thrive in! Volunteering is a great meaningful way to get to know your children's teachers, and other community members! There are a couple of organizational committees (Foundation, Finance) which are by invitation only and offered to seasoned Walden families. However if you have skills, talents and interest to contribute in the future, please let it be known!

## **COMMITTEES**

### **Walden Family Teacher Association (Formerly Walden Parent -Teacher Association)**

This committee hosts an assortment of educational, informative, and festive gatherings which will help Walden grow as a community. The Walden Staff often asks the WFTA to help with events.

### **Fundraising Committee**

This committee brainstorms and supports fundraising at Walden beyond those established fundraisers which are assigned. The Fundraising Committee is dedicated to raising money within our smaller Walden family community and from the Bay Area community at large (and beyond!). In addition, the Fundraising Committee researches and implements Walden's Easy Peasy Fundraising (passive Fundraising opportunities).

### **Green**

This committee helps to make our community more sustainable. They collaborate to find and implement solutions to reduce waste and increase recycling through advocacy and action. The Green Committee is also called upon to track and facilitate "Green School" recertification, which is due every 5 years. The Green Committee has also organized Walk and Roll to school events, and Bike Parties.

### **Emergency Preparedness**

This committee keeps the school stocked with necessary items to support us in a disaster situation. They also review our disaster plan annually, and keep the staff informed of available training classes.

### **Respect for All (RFA)**

Help our school climate! This committee examines issues around teasing and bullying, and how to help our children be their best selves with their schoolmates. Over the years we have worked on issues related to gender spectrum inclusivity, anti-bias work, and women's equality. Family grown-ups on the Committee are welcome to contribute ideas to help keep the Committee vital and current.

## **Marketing**

If you have expertise in marketing or just want to promote Walden, we can always use your help. Please contact Winona.

## **P.E.A.C.E.**

The Peace, Equity, Activism, Conversation, and Education Committee looks at ways to support diversity, anti-bias, equity, and inclusion in our community.

## **FUNDRAISING**

The Walden Community plans a variety of fundraising projects. The main beneficiary of our fundraising efforts is our financial aid program. Financial aid ensures that the Walden community reflects the economic diversity of the greater East Bay community, which in turn benefits all members of our community. There are a number of annual fundraising events. Volunteer work on these events is vital to the school. In addition, Work Crew members and others whose jobs total less than 50 hours can fulfill work commitments by working on fundraising projects.

- **The Walden Spring Fair** is one of our major fundraisers and a tradition begun over forty years ago. Starting in January, committees are formed by the Spring Fair Coordinator to organize the fair. Each Walden Family adult is required to donate a minimum of two hours work during the fair, as well as an item to the raffle. Families are also requested to donate items to themed class baskets. Activities include a book room, a raffle, children's games, live entertainment, and sales of arts and crafts, baked goods, food, and plants. It's a wonderful celebration of our community.
- **The Walden Annual Giving Fund** is a fundraising campaign, which solicits donations from all current and past members of the Walden Community.
- **The Walden Benefit and Gala** is a gala event featuring cocktails, delicious foods, an auction, and live music.
- Other fundraising activities include a photo benefit, sales of raffle tickets, and a variety of smaller events.

## **OTHER WAYS TO VOLUNTEER**

### **Festival Support and Participation**

Families are encouraged to come to our annual craft-filled festivals. Staff appreciates the extra adults helping with projects and ushering kids to their next activity.

### **Classroom Support:**

Also, teachers welcome family participation in the classroom on a voluntary basis. Talk to your child's teachers to learn how to help out.

## **Field trip Chaperone**

Driving on field trips is most welcome. We need a copy of your driver's license and proof of car insurance.

## **Room Parent**

Each classroom needs one or two parents or guardians to volunteer to be a room parent. Room parents are asked to help coordinate parent participation and assist in communication amongst families and faculty throughout the school year.

## **Spread the Word**

If you know families looking for schools, let them know about Walden. Point them to our website ([www.waldencenterschool.org](http://www.waldencenterschool.org)), Walden's Facebook page, or have them contact Winona Alexander at [admissions@waldencenterschool.com](mailto:admissions@waldencenterschool.com).

If your former (or present) preschool has an information meeting about schools, please consider attending on Walden's behalf. You can obtain materials from Winona Alexander.

## **EXPENSE REPORTS**

In the course of doing committee work or other support of Walden, families occasionally make purchases on behalf of Walden. If you have obtained prior approval from a Walden staff member to make a purchase on behalf of the school, you may obtain reimbursement by filling out a Walden Expense Report. These expense reports are found in the office or you may email Joline Barsanti at [businessmanager@waldencenterschool.org](mailto:businessmanager@waldencenterschool.org) for an electronic copy.

This form needs to be completed in full and the original receipt attached for reimbursement. Please note that expense reports must be handed in no later than the 10th of the month following the date of the receipts. For instance, a receipt dated July 27 must be handed in by August 10, a receipt dated November 2 must be handed in by December 10, etc. If your expense report is not handed in according to the stated deadline, your expense will not be reimbursable.

# **ENROLLMENT, CONTINUANCE, and WITHDRAWAL**

## **ENROLLMENT**

Inquiries about admission to Walden are welcome at any time. Families of prospective Walden students are invited to attend an information session and/or tour and submit an application form. The prospective student visits Walden as part of the application process.

In cooperation with other independent schools in the East Bay, Walden makes its enrollment offers in March for admission the following September. To confirm acceptance, a signed contract and a nonrefundable deposit is required within one week. For continuing Walden students, a signed contract and a nonrefundable deposit of the yearly tuition is required in February for the following school year.

## **CONTINUANCE**

The school accommodates a wide range of student interests and learning styles. Teachers respect the individuality of every child and refrain from establishing group-wide standards of performance. Therefore, once admitted to Walden, a child is welcome to continue unless:

- They or a member of their family persistently and or uncontrollably interfere with the safety or learning of others.
- The staff believes that the learning environment at Walden does not best serve the individual child.
- The family's work commitment is not met.
- The family does not pay tuition.

(See Appendix A for specific information about Walden's discipline policies regarding a child's behavior.)

## **WITHDRAWAL**

Withdrawal of a student enrolled for the full school year has serious consequences for our budget, staffing, and planning. We therefore stipulate in our "Enrollment and Tuition Agreement" that the signature of the guardian "obligates me/us to full payment of the annual tuition amount."

## **REPORT CARD REQUESTS and LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION**

When it is time to move to a new school, schools often request a report card. Since Walden does not grade children, we do not have report cards. We write a letter documenting the fact

that a child attended Walden and explain the absence of report cards. Please give our Admissions Coordinator three working days notice to prepare the letter.

Independent schools ask for teacher letters of recommendation. When requesting teachers to write letters, please allow at least two weeks before the due date. If the letter is to be mailed, please provide a stamped, addressed envelope.

# SCHOOL CULTURE AND RULES

## RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM

Within the classroom, we generally follow the Responsive Classroom philosophy but with a Walden lens. Teachers have familiarity with, are trained in, and/or are mentored in the philosophy. In RC, students co-create the classroom environment by beginning the year by setting class norms, these class norms are revisited and revised if needed throughout the year. Students also meet regularly in class meetings, which set the tone for the day, builds community, solves problems, and builds in space for appreciations.

The approach is research-based and is focused on creating safe, joyous, engaging classrooms. RC teaches conflict resolution, restorative practices like i-messages differentiated for different grades, and uses reminders, nonpunitive break spaces (calm corners, buddy rooms, designated cool down spots), check-ins, and logical consequences for responding to breaking classroom norms depending on the situation.

## RESPECT FOR ALL— TEASING AND BULLYING POLICY

Walden Center and School promotes and encourages a healthy, respectful social environment. Walden's response to teasing and bullying incidents involves an assessment of the situation, discussion with students involved and their families, and close monitoring of future incidents. If the situation doesn't resolve with these steps, a progressive discipline model may be used: verbal and written warnings, and possible suspension and/or expulsion (see [Appendix A](#)).

The school and community are committed to identifying bullying incidents and responding in a timely manner, with empathy and understanding for the parties involved.

## SCHOOL RULES

There is also a list of specific enforced rules at Walden that all staff review and revise yearly based on how things are going. The rules are based on philosophy, safety, supervision, negotiation between classrooms, and enforceability. Some are repeats of classroom rules or may fall under school discipline policy (no hitting/kicking etc).

Rules are enforced with reminders, and logical consequences depending on the rule and situation. These rules can be flexible and may change midyear based on conditions (like COVID), group needs, and trends (new popular toys- trolls etc). [School Rules](#)

## BIRTHDAYS

Every child will have an opportunity to be acknowledged on their birthday. (Summer birthdays acknowledged in June.) The specifics of how birthdays are recognized within each class will vary by teacher. Touch base with your child's teacher in advance of your child's birthday in order to plan.



If you are planning a birthday party outside of school and you are inviting members of your child's class, please consider inviting the entire class whenever possible to avoid hurt feelings. For the same reason, we ask that invitation-sending and gift-giving take place outside of the school setting.

We encourage children to share their home lives with us at school when they are inspired to and we understand the level of excitement that children hold around the topic of parties. Never-the-less, we do try to minimize in-school conversations about birthday parties. When they do inevitably occur, the Walden staff are dedicated to finding a balance between honoring the excitement of the child and holding empathy for children who either may not have been invited or were not able to attend the party.

## Appendix A: Student Discipline

In recommending disciplinary actions, the staff at Walden may consider the child's present demeanor and past disciplinary issues, the nature of the offense, the severity of the injury or harm resulting, while taking into account the best interest of the school. If deemed appropriate, the staff may choose to take one or more of the following actions:

- A. Conversation: The first line of discipline is conversation. Staff members will relay expectations and suggestions for future behavior through a one-to-one dialogue between parties.
- B. Conference: This is a formal conversation held between a student and staff member(s) and the student's family to discuss discrepancies between classroom expectations and actual student performance.
- C. Special Behavior Program: Should the child exhibit behaviors that require measure beyond basic teacher management, Walden staff may have a written behavior contract, where certain behaviors are recorded and reviewed with the student each day.
- D. Probation: A specified period of time during which any further violation of school rules will receive careful scrutiny, and may subject the student to further disciplinary action.
- E. Suspension: A specified period of time during which the student is sent home and prohibited from attending classes or participating in the school program. The suspension conference with appropriate staff members includes the following:
  - Notice of grounds for suspension
  - An explanation of the evidence or facts upon which the school staff have determined that the student has committed a serious offense.
  - An opportunity for the student to present her/his/their own version of the facts or explain the events or actions upon which the suspension is based.
  - The student, along with parent/s or guardians, must attend a re-entry conference with the staff before being allowed to return to school.
  - Expulsion: The student is permanently separated from the program at the school. The student may no longer participate in any school programs or related activities.
- F. Suspension and expulsion are rare, and decisions to resort to the most severe disciplinary actions are made on a case-by-case basis. Although it is not possible to list all potential causes for suspension and expulsion, the following are problems that make severe disciplinary action more likely:
  - The student exhibits an ongoing pattern of behavior which interferes with his/her/their educational development and/or that of other students in the school.
  - The student requires frequent or constant one-to-one attention in order to function adequately in the school.
  - The student has received two suspensions during a semester or three suspensions during the school year.
  - The families do not attend individual conferences and/or do not follow through on the schools recommendations for implementing agreed-upon programs or referrals.
  - Tuition payments become delinquent.

- Possession of drugs/alcohol/weapons.
- Assaultive contact, either physical or the use of hate speech, which includes racial slurs. Use includes simply saying or referring to racial slurs at school, because children have not developed sufficient judgment regarding racial slurs and because their use is harmful.
- Serious disrespect for school staff.
- Repeated harassment of fellow students.

The severity of a student's actions may warrant a student receiving a more severe consequence. Levels of consequence initiate with the conversation and progress in severity; however, there is no set sequence of steps. The determination of a consequence is related to several factors, including the severity of the violation, history of the student, and overall impact on the school. Having received a consequence for a violation, a student must be aware that further violations will result in more severe consequences in the future.

# Appendix B: Employee Standards of Conduct

In compliance with AB 500 - Employee codes of conduct: employee interactions with pupils, the following is published:

## **PROHIBITED CONDUCT REGARDING EMPLOYEE INTERACTIONS WITH PUPILS:**

1. Fraternalization between any employee of Walden (which includes, but is not limited to, Collective members, staff, administrators, non-Collective teachers, and assistants) and students.
2. Sexual relations between any employee of Walden (which includes, but is not limited to, Collective members, staff, administrators, non-Collective teachers, and assistants) and students.
3. Being disrespectful or discourteous to, or utilizing profanity or abusive language toward, a student, parent, fellow employee, or any other person in the course of performing one's duties for the school.
4. Theft of any property belonging to the school, any employee, or any student.
5. Inappropriate behavior involving any student, including but not limited to physical or verbal abuse.
6. Engaging in horseplay or other activities that pose a threat to the safety or welfare of others.

# Appendix C: Work Commitment Jobs List

## CREW JOBS

Saturday Work Crew Member: 39 hours  
Saturday Work Crew Leader: 50 hours  
Saturday Work Crew Coordinator: 25 hours  
Main Construction Crew Leader: 50 hours  
Construction Crew Member: 50 hours  
Gardening Crew Coordinator: 25 hours  
Gardening Crew Member: 25-50 hours  
Office Staff: A Half Year: 50 hours

## MIDWEEK CLEAN-UP JOBS

Midweek Bathroom & Garbage Can Clean-Up: 2 People: 36 hours/Year (1 hour/Week)  
Office Midweek Cleanup: 36 hours/Year (1 hour/Week)  
EDC Midweek Cleanup: 36 hours/Year (1 hour/Week)  
Studio Midweek Cleanup: 36 hours/Year (1 hour/Week)  
Upper Group Midweek Cleanup: 36 hours/Year (1 hour/Week)  
Middle Group Midweek Cleanup: 36 hours/Year (1 hour/Week)  
Lower-Middle Group Midweek Cleanup: 36 hours/Year (1 hour/Week)  
Lower Group Midweek Cleanup: 50 hours/Year  
Art Room Midweek Cleanup: 50 hours/Year:

## OTHER JOBS

Art Room Support Person: 50 hours  
Music Support Person: 50 hours  
Upper Group Play Support: 50 hours  
Admissions Assistant: 50 hours  
Lost & Found: 14 hours  
Spring Fair Coordinator: 50 hours  
Spring Fair Raffle Coordinator: 50 hours  
Photo Benefit Photographer: 50 hours  
T-Shirt Benefit Design & Coordinator: 50 hours  
Gala Benefit Coordinator: 50 hours  
Gala Benefit Auction Coordinator: 50 hours  
Gala Benefit Raffle Coordinator: 25 hours  
Gala Benefit Caterer: 50 hours  
Computer Technician: 50 hours

Website & Database Support: 50 hours  
Development Assistant: 50 hours  
Graphic Designer: 50 hours

## **SPRING FAIR JOBS**

Café and bakery: 11 hours

Child games: 14 hours

Prizes for games: 11 hours

Decorations: 25 hours

BBQ: 25 hours (lots of grilling and preparation)

Hot dog stand: between 4-11 hours, TBD

Cold beverages: between 4-11 hours, TBD

Cakewalk: between 4-11 hours, TBD

Lunch room: between 4-11 hours, TBD

Art room craft/art sale: 25 hours

Book room: 25 hours

Plant Sale: 25 hours

Beer Coordinator: 4 hours

Ticket Coordinator: 11 hours

Entertainment Coordinator (for stage performances): 25 hours

