

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the San Francisco Waldorf School's Parent-Child Program. I am delighted that you will be joining me for the **Rainbows Babies Observation Class**.

Please allow me to introduce myself. I am the mother of three children and three step-children. Five of our children attended Waldorf school. I attended the San Francisco Waldorf Teacher Training of Rudolf Steiner College and UC Berkeley. I have worked with young children and families for the last 30 years in a variety of capacities: as a family home day care provider, public school teacher, Waldorf Kindergarten and Nursery teacher and Parent-Child teacher. I also am a teacher at LifeWays Northern California Coast and the Bay Area Center for Waldorf Teacher Training. I am a fluent signer and plan to introduce to you and your baby some basic signs during this session. It is with great joy and pleasure that I take up this work with you as you begin or continue your exploration of Waldorf Education.

My assistant will be Anamaria Issacs. Anamaria is originally from Colombia. She first came to Waldorf education as a parent in our Parent-Child program when her daughter was only 10 months old. While taking the Parent-Child classes, she realized that Waldorf education was the perfect fit for her family and decided to enroll her daughter in the nursery program. Gabriela is now in her second year of kindergarten and the family looks forward to continuing their journey with Waldorf education. Anamaria has worked in various positions within international recruiting and social work for over 20 years. After moving from Colombia to Europe, where she lived for over 4 years, she moved to the Bay Area where she has settled and is happy to be raising a family around the supportive and wonderful Waldorf community.

Below are details regarding the class.

**First Class:** Wednesday, January 17th, 11am - 12:30 pm

**Location:** 2107 Lyon Street at Washington in the beautiful Parish House of the Swedenborgian Church, one of the earliest examples of California's Arts and Crafts movement.

**Parking:** It is nice to give yourself a little bit of extra time on the first day for parking/transit. There is a white zone in front of the Parish House on Lyon Street that you are welcome to park in and spots can often be found along Washington or Jackson, as well as along Lyon. Please note that there are two small sets of stairs to navigate to enter the Parish House and carrying your baby may be easier than bringing a stroller.

**Electronic Devices:** Prior to entering through the iron gates, please turn off and put away all electronic devices. Our class time is a screens free time. Please arrange for important phone calls or meetings to take place before or after class. Thank you for your cooperation with this policy. It will help us all to enjoy our time together without the interruption of electronic devices and allow us to focus our attention on the children. The one exception to this rule is that on the first day of class I would like to take a photo of you and your baby in order to facilitate my learning your names.

**Arrival:** Please arrive between 11:00 and 11:15 am. There is a beautiful walled garden to enjoy should you arrive earlier than 11:00 and you can spend time there after class as well.

**What to bring:** A blanket to lay your child on as well as a cozy lightweight hat to protect your child's head from drafts and other babies' exploring hands. Warm socks or slippers for your child and yourself (as we take shoes off in this space) are also helpful. Dressing the children in layers, with a long-sleeved shirt and pants, will help them feel warmer and thus safer and happier during our observation time. I have attached below a document with information about where to purchase warm woolies and rain gear. Please do not bring sippy cups and snacks. We'll talk more about why at our first class. Thank you.

**Parent responsibilities:** While I will set up our space each week as best as I can for it to be a warm, nurturing and safe environment, it is not a dedicated early childhood classroom. Please stay close to a very active child at first to see how they interact with the space. Each parent is responsible for the well being of their child. Please remember to treat every child as you would like your own child to be treated - with respect, generosity and loving kindness. Once your child becomes familiar with the space, and you become comfortable with your child's behavior in the setting, you can step back a bit and allow your child to explore and move to and from you in a natural rhythm.

**Class Rhythm:** The first fifteen minutes of our class are dedicated to arriving and settling in. We'll start class around 11:15, gathering together on the floor for songs and a lavender hand wash for parents and foot rub for the babies. This is our warming-in time, where we begin to transition into a quieter mood in preparation for our observation experience. During observation time, which begins and ends with the "Seashell" song, we will hold back on our adult conversation for 10 to 20 minutes and turn our attention to the children, guiding and intervening in a quiet voice as needed, but leaving them as free as possible to initiate their own movements and exploration.

I will invite everyone to **begin with their child laid down on his or her back on the floor** rather than propped up or put on their tummies. This is a very supportive position from which to build up the capacities needed to roll and turn and eventually to sit-up, stand and walk. One of the foundations of our class will be the exploration of the child's **self-directed will generated movement**. Another important aspect of this class is that we strive to allow true freedom of movement for the children, therefore we allow the child the joy of accomplishing their own developmental steps without our propping and supporting (more on this as the class evolves).

That said, whatever you feel your baby needs, I want you to feel totally comfortable doing. Some children will need more time to feel safe being placed down; some will already be cruising around the room and won't stay on the blanket very long (just fine! They can be observed and guided as needed while they explore and play). Some babies may need to be held for much of the class.

My hope is to create a safe and nurturing space for everyone while understanding that we are each in different places along our parenting path. Some families have taken our class before and will be more comfortable letting their child explore with less adult guidance. Others are new to the Waldorf approach and may need time to experience how, if one gradually creates more and more opportunity for totally free self-initiated movement this enables each unique child time to unfold on his or her own time table. Through this process, we can nurture a loving and warm parent-child relationship. In this environment the beginnings of free imaginative play and the development of balance, coordination and self-confidence can emerge and blossom.

**Food:** At 12:00 we will serve a warm organic snack for parents which will include herbal tea, soup, bread and fruit. **Please let me know if you have any food allergies.** When everyone is served, we will begin our meal with a blessing. And we will end our time at the table with our goodbye song. Please bring a bib if your child will be sitting in a high chair. Please reserve our linen napkins for adult use.

Of course you can nurse your baby or give them a bottle at any time in the classroom. But, please do not allow your baby to roam around with food, a bottle or a cup. If you feel that you need to eat, drink or feed your baby solid food prior to our time at the table, please bring your food to the dining room table and eat there. Please do not bring coffee cups, mugs, thermoses, etc. into our classroom space. Thank you for your cooperation with this.

**Weekly readings links:** Articles will be sent by the Friday following class via email after the first class. Our readings form the foundation of understanding Waldorf Early Childhood education and are offered in a spirit of mutual exploration. Some of the assigned readings come from Waldorf educators and others are from pediatricians or other experts in child development. I hope we can all question, learn, and strive together.

**Illness Policy:** If your child is ill, please be sure that he or she has been fever and/or symptom free for at least 24 hours before returning to class. And, be sure your child has the energy to participate in class. Sometimes young children need several days of resting at home before venturing out. Some cold symptoms, like runny noses can last for weeks. Children may return to class with a clear runny nose that needs infrequent wiping or unproductive cough as long as they have the energy to participate and it is 24 hours past the onset of these symptoms. Please call or email me if you have questions.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to be in touch via email or phone. Thank you and I look forward to beginning our time together next week.

With my best wishes,

Diana