



Elementary School Family Handbook 2010-2011

This handbook is designed to give you information about the school's policies, and practices. There is also a wealth of information on our website regarding our philosophy and inspirations. We hope you find both the handbook and website to be helpful, but please do not hesitate to contact us regarding any questions or concerns you might have. Our goal is to have open communication with parents to ensure the best possible experience for you and your children.

-Michele Beach & Elizabeth Baker, Directors

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MISSION STATEMENT

Located in East Boulder County, The Patchwork School works with children, families, and the community to preserve every person's right to a life of self-direction, meaning, and joy. Within our educational environment, we place equal importance on both freedom and responsibility, and understand that all people, regardless of age, are agents for change when they engage critically and compassionately with the world.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

To foster an equitable, nurturing, and stimulating environment for educational experiences and community building, The Patchwork School affirms that its students, staff, volunteers and guests have a right to be free from discrimination. We invite all people to participate in the activities, events and community of our school. We do not discriminate on any basis (cultural background, ethnicity, race, color, age, gender, sexual orientation, sex, disability, marital status or spirituality) in the administration of our care, instruction, admission, employment, or tuition assistance policies.

DESCRIPTION

The Patchwork School is a small, non-profit, learning community with full-time and part-time options for children ages two and a half through six (at the First School) and elementary ages (at the Elementary School). For elementary students, we offer flexible scheduling with full-day and part-day options ranging from three to five days a week. Both directors, Michele Beach and Elizabeth Baker, have Master's degrees in Educational Psychology as well as Early Childhood Teaching Licenses. The school's philosophy has evolved through our own research and experience with various educational approaches, including Reggio Emilia and freeschooling. Our school supports children by:

- knowing each child as unique and as possessing diverse strengths and interests.
- providing an opportunity for children to develop critical thinking skills, as well as focus and concentration by directing their own learning in the context of a rich and meaningful environment.
- valuing both freedom and challenge in the learning process.
- building upon each child's natural interests and learning styles to co-create long-term projects and in-depth work that naturally embeds math, literacy, science, art, music, social studies, and more.
- recognizing the importance of emotional healthiness and offering each child tools for successfully navigating both social and personal arenas.
- cultivating a sense of self as an agent for change by engaging in experiments, inquiries and experiences that speak to the need for social justice

CONTACTING US

- **Hours of Operation** – The Elementary School building is open from 8:30am-3:00pm, Monday through Thursday. The First School building is open from 8:00am-4:00pm, Monday through Friday.
- **Phone** – During our Hours of Operation you will be able to reach us at: 720-271-6729. If we are unable to answer, please leave a message. Messages will be checked periodically throughout the day and calls will be returned as soon as possible.
- **Office Hours** – There is typically a director in the office from 1pm-4pm.
- **Fax** – Our fax is 303-604-4365. You may use this to fax us any forms for registration.
- **Email** – The best way to reach us outside of our normal operating hours is by email. If you use info@thepatchworkschool.com your message will reach the directors.

FACULTY

- **Directors** – the school administration is shared by the two co-directors, Michele Beach and Elizabeth Baker. As mentioned above, Michele & Elizabeth both have Master’s Degrees in Educational Psychology and teaching licenses for Early Childhood from the Colorado Department of Education. For more background and biographical information, please see the “Teachers & Staff” section of the website.
- **Teachers** – The Elementary School will have one Head Teacher and one Assistant Teacher. Each of these teachers have experience and education in the field of Early Childhood Education. You can read the teachers’ bios on the website.
- **Training** – all teachers and interns are certified in CPR and First Aid as well as Universal Precautions.

AGE GROUPINGS

Children will be placed into one or two groupings, roughly according to age. However the groupings may change from year to year depending on the make-up of the ages overall and on individual children's needs. The children will spend morning meeting time in their age groupings (or in all-school meetings), but for the rest of the day will be interacting with children from all groupings.

The head teacher will be the parents' first point of contact for questions and concerns about their child and will be responsible for keeping tabs on the child throughout the year.

PAYMENTS, FEES & DISCOUNTS

- **Registration** – There is a \$150 registration fee per child each year for returning families (\$175 for new families). The registration fee and the first month’s payment are due at time of registration and are non-refundable. Tuition will be pro-rated if the child is registered after the year begins.
- **Parent Orientation** – There is a required parent orientation class for new families, which is covered by the additional \$25 of your registration fee. Please check the website for details on the time and location of the class. This will be separate from the preschool orientation, so all students that are new to the Elementary School should have a parent attend.
- **Tuition** – The tuition may be paid for in one annual payment, or on a monthly schedule. All payments are **non-refundable** . Please see the Payment Contract for tuition rates.
- **After Hours Care** – The payment for After Hours Care and Fridays works exactly as the tuition does – it may be paid for in one annual payment, or on a monthly schedule. Please see the Payment Contract for rates.
- **Sibling Discounts** – There are no sibling discounts for the Elementary School at this time.
- **Drop-In** – The rate for drop-ins is hourly, at \$9.50/hour, and payment will be required on or before the drop-in date.
- **Payments** – Payments may be made in cash or check payable to The Patchwork School. Payments for the annual plan are due in full by August 15th, 2010. Payments for the monthly plan will be due on the 15th of each month. Please see the Payment Contract for more details.
- **Returned Checks** – The returned check fee is \$25.00.
- **Late Fee** – If payment is received after the due date a \$25.00 late payment fee will be assessed.
- **Overtime Fee** – After a ten minute grace period, any late pickups will be charged \$10.00 for every ten minutes (or any portion thereof).

- **Tuition Increases** – Barring any extreme circumstances, our goal is to keep increases to no more than 2-4% each year and to avoid any mid-year increases.
- **Schedule Changes** – Parents may choose to change their child’s schedule only at each trimester, provided that the requested days & hours are available. We will not make any schedule changes or refunds mid-trimester, unless you would like to add a new day, add an afternoon, or add new after care.

ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATION

- **Registration Forms** – All registration and authorization forms (except for health status forms) must be received by April 15th 2010.
- **Health Status Forms** – Health Status forms must be filled out by a physician who has seen your child for a well visit within the last year. The Health Status form must be received by us by August 15th 2010 (please mail or fax). Your child will not be able to start school and you will lose your reserved space if all forms are not received on time.
- **Immunizations** – Please have the certificate of immunization filled out by your child’s physician, along with the Health Status Form. If you choose not to have your child immunized because of medical, religious, or personal reasons, please sign the appropriate section of the form. This must be returned on the provided form.
- **Asthma Forms** – If your child has Asthma, you will need an additional form signed by your physician (this can be our form or theirs). If they require an inhaler, it will need to be provided in the original packaging (with prescription label). We will also need the dosage and doctor’s directions either on the Asthma form or separate.
- **Allergy Forms** – If your child has any severe allergies requiring medication, you will need an additional form signed by your physician (again this can be our form or theirs). Any prescribed medication needs to be provided in the original packaging (with prescription label). Medication name and droppers must match the prescription exactly (ex. If prescription states “Benadryl” we cannot accept generic or if prescription states “1 tsp” we cannot take a dropper with only mL).
- **Student Information Changes** – Whenever anything from the student information form changes, please be sure to let us know as soon as possible. It is important for us to have current medical, pick-up, and contact information.
- **Special Needs** – For any child with a disability, defined by the ADA as a “physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities,” we will make all “readily achievable accommodations” possible, in accordance with the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act. Therefore, children will be accepted on a case by case basis. Children with disabilities will be fully integrated into the school’s regular activities. Teachers will work with parents to determine if and how the school can meet the child’s needs. The school may also offer various screenings which parents may take advantage of if they choose.
- **Withdrawals** – We ask that families give us as much notice as possible before withdrawing their child from school. We do not offer any refunds of tuition. If tuition is not paid by the required date, we will have to assume that the child is being withdrawn and will offer their space to another family. The Patchwork School does not have an application process, and does not anticipate any scenarios under which an eligible student would be refused service – we hope to work with families to ensure that teacher, parent and child are all in agreement regarding the child’s needs. However, in the unlikely event that we are unable to reach consensus with a family regarding any issues that may arise, the child will be dis-enrolled with no refund.

HOLIDAYS, VACATIONS, SICK DAYS & CLOSURES

- **School Holidays** – Please see the school calendar for closure dates.
- **Student Vacation/Sick Day** – Families will not be refunded for school days (or After Hours Care) missed for family vacations or student illness. Please notify us as soon as possible if your child will be missing one of their regularly scheduled days.
- **School Closures** – The Patchwork School will be closed on all days for which the Boulder Valley School District declares a school closure (this could be for snow or other emergencies). There is always a chance that we will need to close the school for some other reason. In such a case, families will be contacted as soon as possible using our automated phone tree. Feel free to call any morning to verify that school will be open. Again, no tuition will be refunded for any school closures.

ILLNESSES

- **Sick Children** – If your child appears to be too uncomfortable to be at school, or seems to have an illness that could be contagious, we will ask that you keep your child at home. If they become sick while at school, we will call you to pick them up. We request that you keep your child at home until they are symptom free and/or on antibiotics for 24 hours before returning to school. If you are working, please be sure to plan for alternate care for your child when they become sick, as illnesses do occur more often in group situations.
- **Medication** – Any prescriptive or non-prescriptive medication can be administered by faculty members only with a current prescription (or written authority) from a physician AND written parental consent. You may use the form provided (available in the office) or any equivalent alternative. Epinephrine or nebulized medication must also be accompanied by a written protocol (See "Allergy Forms" above). Please provide the medication in its original container with pharmacy label (if applicable) and labeled with your child's first and last name. Medication will be stored in a child-proof area and administered only by a teacher that has been delegated with medication administration from the Nurse Consultant in compliance with the "Nurse Practice Act."
- **Lotions/Creams** – Topical preparations provided by parents, including diaper creams, lotion and bug sprays can be administered with written parental consent as long as they are not applied to open wounds or broken skin.
- **Contagious Illnesses** – Please report any contagious illnesses (including pink eye, strep, chicken pox, measles, mumps, hepatitis, etc.) to a director as soon as possible so that we may alert other families. Your child's name will be kept confidential. Certain illnesses and accidents must be reported to the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care.
- **Cuts/Scrapes** – Due to licensing requirement, we are not permitted to apply antibacterial ointments or remove splinters. The mandated treatment of minor cuts and abrasions is to wash thoroughly with soap and water and apply a bandage. Such an injury will be communicated to parents with a "Bandaid Receipt."

EMERGENCY & SECURITY

- **Pick-up** – Children will only be released to the adults for whom written authorization has been given. In an emergency, the child may be released to an adult for whom the child's parent or guardian has given verbal authorization. If the caregiver doesn't know the adult, identification must be required to assure the adult is authorized to pick up the child. The last teacher to leave the school each day will

be responsible for using the sign-in sheets to verify that all children have been signed out. If for some reason a child is not picked-up at the end of the day, the teacher will contact a director and then attempt to contact the parent, guardian, and or emergency contacts until someone is reached that can pick the child up. If no authorized person is located after two hours, the teacher or director will notify the Police and/or Social Services. Overtime fees will apply. Please note that if a teacher senses that a child is genuinely uncomfortable about leaving with an authorized person, the child will not be forced to leave. Another parent or guardian will be contacted to come and pick the child up.

- **Contacting Parents** – In the event of an emergency, our first priority will be to attend to the child(ren). Emergency services will then be called if necessary, after which parents will immediately be contacted. If we are unable to contact you, we will contact the emergency contact listed on your Student Information Form. In the event of an all-school emergency, you will be notified via our automated phone tree.
- **Contacting School** – If parents should ever need to contact the school, they should call the school phone number. If we are not able to answer, please leave a message. Messages will be checked periodically throughout the day and calls will be returned as soon as possible.
- **Door Code** – There will be a security keypad on the door through which you will normally be entering and exiting. You will be informed of the code on your first day of school. Please be sure not to give the code out any more than is necessary. If you feel the code has been compromised, please let us know so that we may change it. Also, be aware that the code will only be effective during operating hours.
- **Emergencies** – If an emergency situation (such as a tornado warning, blizzard warning, fire, etc.) were to occur while your child is at school, you will be notified via our automated phone tree. You will be directed as to how and where you can pick up your child. Teachers would remain with the children until they are all picked up. Certain incidents will be reported to the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care, as required.

Lost Child Emergency Procedure – In the event that a child cannot be located, faculty will begin by searching the immediate area. A director will be notified, as well as all other faculty as they are encountered. A faculty member will be assigned to stand watch at the front gate, and other faculty members will be assigned to each area of the school. If the child cannot be found within 5 minutes, 911 will be called and parents/guardians will be notified as soon as possible.

MEALS & SNACKS

- **Snacks** – We will provide one snack each day. If you would like to participate in helping us with snacks ideas or with providing food, we would be more than happy to have your input.
- **Lunches** – Children will need to bring a lunch with them every day. Please be aware that children will not be able to share any food from their lunch with any other child (including a sibling) due primarily to allergy concerns. We will also not be able to heat food up and we recommend including ice packs in lunches, as we will not be able to store any lunch items in the refrigerator.
- **Dietary Restrictions** – We will do our best to work with you to ensure that all of the children’s dietary needs are met, despite any restrictions you or they may have. However, if a child requires food that significantly differs from the menu for the rest of the children, we ask that parents either bring food or provide reimbursement for special items.
- **No Nuts** – We are a nut-free school, so no foods containing peanuts, tree-nuts, or other nut products may be brought into the school. At least one of our students has a severe, life-threatening allergy to nuts and thus it is critical to avoid any contact with this food. Please help us in reading labels before

packing any foods for school – especially muffins, granola bars, cereals, etc. to check for “hidden” ingredients. If your child has eaten nut products before coming to school, please be sure his or her hands and face have been thoroughly washed before entering the building. Please note that Sunflower Butter and Soy Butter are both excellent alternatives to nut butters.

- **Milk/Drinks** – Please bring a water bottle or cup labeled with your child’s name so that they have access to it throughout the day. No juice or other drinks will be served except possibly for special celebrations. No milk will be provided, so if desired please provide in a leak-proof container in your child’s lunch box with ice pack. Please make sure that all drink containers are taken home each day to be washed (or for water bottles, at the end of the week).
- **Treats/Special Occasions** – For birthdays and other special occasions, we are happy to have parents bring in special foods. Please check with a teacher to find out about any allergies or other dietary restrictions of children that will be attending that day.

DAILY LIFE

- **Drop-Off/Parking** – Having staggered drop-offs allows us to welcome each child individually as they arrive, and will help parking to go more smoothly, so the window for Elementary School drop-offs will be 8:35-8:50. Please do make sure that you park only in the spaces directly in front of one of the school buildings. Please do not park in front of the businesses to the north or the south of the school or in the middle school parking lot. If you are visiting the school for any reason besides just dropping off or picking up or expect to stay longer than about 10 minutes please use alternate parking in front of a nearby residence (not business) in order to keep the traffic in front of the school moving smoothly.
- **Sign-in/Pick-up** – Please be sure to fill out all information on the sign-in and pick-up sheet. This will help us to ensure that your child is picked-up only by those persons authorized by you on the Student Information Form. Teachers will also use the sign-in sheets throughout the day to confirm that all children that are signed in are accounted for. Please be sure to pick children up early or on time (there is a ten minute grace period after which overtime charges will apply).
- **Visits** – Parents and families are always welcome. Anyone else that would like to visit your child may also do so (grandparents, etc.) with your permission. Please let us know when they will be coming and ensure that they are prepared to show identification and sign-in upon arriving.
- **Television** – There will be no TV watching at school. Teachers may occasionally show the children a short educational video or clips from the internet pertaining to something we are studying.
- **Green Cleaning/Sanitizing** – The school employs a “green” cleaning company to clean the school at the end of each day. We also have recycling and composting in addition to trash. Teachers sanitize all eating areas and diapering areas throughout each day. Other areas of the school are sanitized on a rotating basis.
- **Computers** – Computers will be used with teacher supervision throughout the day for the purposes of research, communication, and expression. No video games will be allowed at any time.
- **Celebrations** – We would welcome your help in celebrating your child’s birthday or any other family holidays. Please let us know about any traditions you would like to share, and see the “Treats/Special Occasions” section above for information about bringing food.
- **Walks** – We will occasionally take walks with the children to nearby locations. Please ensure you have given permission on the Student Information Form. Walks will likely be to the park, library, or other neighborhood facilities.
- **Field Work Days/Field Trips** – Parents will be notified of plans for any field trips requiring vehicular transportation. Transportation will be arranged by recruiting parent volunteers, if staff vehicles are not

sufficient. We would appreciate your help in volunteering, and may request small fees if appropriate. All children requiring booster seats will need to have their seats dropped off with them in the morning. All children will always be required to remain seated and securely fastened in the vehicles, and no parent or teacher will be responsible for driving and/or supervising more than four children at one time. All chaperones must carry a cell phone at all times so that they may immediately call 911 in an emergency. All chaperones will be provided with instructions as well as emergency contact information for the directors, teachers, and the children. If a child arrives after an all-school field-trip has departed, the parents will be required to bring the child to the field trip location and will not be able to leave the child at the school.

- **Outside** – We will ensure that children have an opportunity to be outside at least once a day when weather is permitting. Please be sure to bring clothing that is appropriate for the weather (including snow pants and boots when necessary). We will apply sunscreen to any child who remains outside in direct sunlight for more than ten minutes. We will provide sunscreen (Water Babies), but you are also welcome to provide your own (please label).
- **Supplies/Belongings** – Your child’s personal belongings will be kept in a cubby at school. Because some project work will be messy, please be sure that your child is dressed appropriately and that they have a change of clothing available. The following items should be available at all times:
 - o Extra clothing
 - o Water bottles
 - o Coats, boots, mittens, hats, slippers, etc.
 - o Swimsuit & towel (during the summer)

See the attached school supply lists for details on what school supplies to provide.

PLEASE LABEL ALL PERSONAL ITEMS (see our website for a labeling company)

- **Share/Store Policy** – Children are allowed to bring additional items from home with the understanding that if they are not interested in sharing, the item will need to remain in their cubby. We request that money stay at home, however if a child does bring money to school, the school will not be responsible for ensuring its safe keeping.
- **Communications** – We strongly encourage parent involvement, and will make every effort to keep communication open and ongoing. Please be sure to speak with one of us whenever you have a question, idea, comment, or concern. We will also be communicating with parents daily at drop-off and pick-up, regularly through notes in parent mailboxes and documentation in the school, and monthly through newsletters. We will also offer “Learning Dialogues” between teachers and parents at regularly scheduled intervals, and can meet beyond that as needed.
- **Anonymous Comments** – If you do have a comment that you would like to have voiced to the Board of Directors anonymously, you may utilize the comment envelope in the cubby room – this is checked by the Parent Connections Committee Board Member periodically.
- **Family Participation** – Besides regular communication, we hope that parents will be frequent participants in the daily lives of the school. We offer numerous ways for parents to volunteer, and various resources to help support you. Please see the “Parents” section of the website for additional information.
- **Adjustment Period** – Children all respond differently to change. Some will be excited about trying something new, some will be nervous, and most will have both feelings at different times. It is normal for your child to cry when you leave, but it is also normal for them not to miss you at all. It is also normal for them to be anxious for the first few weeks and then fine, but it is also normal for them to be excited at first and then have a few weeks where it is more difficult to say goodbye. Keep in mind

that the anxiety about saying goodbye is usually the most difficult part. Once the parent leaves, children are almost always fine within minutes. We will work with each family to find a drop-off routine that works well for both the parent and the child. Also, please know that if a child is truly having a difficult time adjusting, and doesn't seem to feel better shortly after you leave, we will absolutely let you know so that we can work together to find a solution.

- **Conflict Resolution** – In order to support the children in conflict resolution, we model strategies found in democratic learning communities, specifically adhering to a restorative justice approach. Our stance on conflict resolution is heavily influenced by our belief in an education based on relationships within the learning community. This means that we will not use any treats or rewards, or punishments such as time-out. Rather than developing morals, punishments and rewards merely keep children obedient. Autonomy, on the other hand is encouraged by exchanging points of view with children so that they may construct their own understanding. In so doing, one must at times impose restraints, but rather than using unrelated punishments, we will emphasize natural or fitting consequences. Examples would be temporary exclusion from a group as a result of disruptive behavior, calling attention to negative behaviors such as lies, depriving a child of something they misused, or requiring restitution such as cleaning up one's own mess. In each case, though, these sanctions are used within a relationship of mutual trust and affection, and must allow for the child to return to the group when they feel ready. We view conflicts, either with the environment or with others, as opportunities for learning rather than something to be summarily extinguished. Rather than seeing discipline as a means towards promoting classroom learning, this method underscores the value of fostering relationships and creating community by placing its priority above all else. In this approach, the teacher appreciates all perspectives and works to create an inclusive community. In addition, the teacher begins with an image of the child as successful and capable of working through problems within a group. Lastly, a teacher must be committed to honest communication through questions and conversation. The teacher's role is to ensure that children are held responsible for their actions, whether that is helping another child get ice for their pain or clearing their dishes from the table after lunch. The basis for this type of "discipline" is an acknowledgment of the classroom community. Rather than using behavior management in order to create an environment for individual learning, the goal of our method is to promote group learning. This implies that one of the goals of education should be to learn how to work with others. If you have any questions on this topic, we would be happy to discuss it with you further and/or provide additional resources.

RESOURCES

- **Boulder County Family and Children's Services** – The Boulder County Department of Social Services handles reports of suspected abuse or neglect via a 24-hour telephone service (303-678-6247). We are required by law to report all suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.