

Novato Charter School Parent Handbook

MISSION STATEMENT

We believe our students will positively impact the world. Our mission is to guide students to discover their individual gifts, build connections with others, and foster a love of learning.

OUR VALUES

- Respect
- Collaboration
- Creativity and the Art of Teaching
- Holistic/Developmental Approach
- Accountability

CHARTER

Novato Charter School is a nonprofit public benefit corporation organized to manage, operate, guide, direct and promote the school. We are chartered by the Novato Unified School District and we operate as our own local educational agency (LEA). Our charter is renewed every five years.

ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC WALDORF EDUCATION

Novato Charter School is a member of the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education, a national organization that promotes and supports the development of high-quality Public Waldorf Education. They established the Core Principles of Public Waldorf Education which guide the work done in each member school.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

The NCS Board of Directors is comprised of five members who form the exclusive governing body of the charter school. They are dedicated to our mission, vision, and core values, and to ensuring ongoing educational success and fiscal responsibility of the school. Board members are voted in by the community and serve a term of three years. Elections are held in the spring when vacancies occur. The Board delegates operation of the school to the NCS Administration.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Kindergarten

8:35 - 12:45 Monday - Friday

8:35 - 11:00 First week of school

Grades 1 - 8

8:30 - 3:00 Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday

8:30 - 1:00 Thursdays and other minimum days

Class Schedule

8:30-10:40	Main Lesson
10:40-10:50	Snack
10:50-11:10	Recess
11:15-11:55	1st Period
12:00-12:40	2nd Period
12:40-12:55	Lunch
12:55-1:15	Recess
1:20-2:00	3rd Period
2:05-2:45	4th Period
3:00	Dismissal

ADMISSION FORMS

All admission forms and annual paperwork are submitted to the school online using SchoolMint (<https://novatocharterschool.schoolmint.net/>). If you have any questions regarding any of the forms, contact our Office Manager. If you have questions regarding your SchoolMint login, contact our Operations Manager. The office phone number is: (415) 883-4254.

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CHILD CARE

We contract with a private licensed childcare provider, Nettie's School Age Childcare, who offers these services to our community. Information and registration packets are available in the office or you can contact Nettie directly at (415)328-4576. DO NOT call the office with aftercare inquiries:

SCHOOL FUNDING

Novato Charter School receives state funding based on our Average Daily Attendance (ADA). We also rely on parent fundraising to close the gap between state funding and the cost of our program.

Novato Charter School Foundation

The Novato Charter School Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public benefit, non-profit organization operated exclusively for the benefit of Novato Charter School. The Foundation supports all of our fundraising efforts, including the annual parent pledge campaign, the Enchanted Garden auction, Grandparents Day, corporate solicitations, grants, and facility pledge campaigns. All Foundation pledges and donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Tax ID #68-0470644.

Class Fund and Annual Fund Pledges

The Foundation requests parents make a voluntary annual contribution to both the Class Fund and the Annual Fund and to participate in the annual school auction party, the Enchanted Garden. Class Funds are used to purchase classroom supplies unique to our program, to cover the cost of overnight field trips, and to purchase and maintain musical

instruments for the school. Contributions to the Annual Fund are used to close the gap between State funding and the cost of our unique program.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parent involvement is essential to the success of our school. There are a number of ways to stay involved in the life of the school.

Class Teacher Support

Classroom support both in and out of school is necessary: assisting in specialty classes, making crafts, special classroom cleaning, doing laundry, bringing flowers, sewing and making costumes, organizing and chaperoning field trips, participating in class projects, phone tree communication, and more.

Site Beautification and Maintenance

Playground, garden, and site development and beautification are important elements of building our school and maintaining quality classrooms and school environments. Help is always needed in these areas, as the school campus is a long-term evolving project.

Board of Directors and Committees

Parent participation is needed on the NCS Board of Directors, the NCS Foundation Board and on school committees.

Commitment to Parent Education

Parents who embrace and support our educational philosophy at home enhance the student's experience. Parent Education events are held throughout the school year. Parents are encouraged to support and attend these events.

Home Life

We are dedicated to nurturing each child's capacity for creative imagination, independent thinking, and positive action. The school strives to foster students' healthy emotional development and meaningful relationships. These experiences are undermined by encounters with media that separate children from direct authentic experience. Students best learn to use electronic media as a resource when these media are introduced after children have developed a rich experiential foundation. Media thus becomes a supplement to, not a substitute for, the richness of direct experience.

As educators and parents, we are unified by the idea of protecting the sanctity of childhood. The goal of our media policy is to help guide and support families as they mindfully navigate the world of media and technology and to support the objectives of Waldorf-methods education. Each family's respect for the Media Policy has a positive effect on the students' educational and social experience at school, which is important for the health of the entire NCS community.

The younger the child, the more vitally important it is to protect the sanctity of childhood. The young child needs to maximize opportunities for movement, social interaction, and

experiences in nature in order to actively engage in the world. As a child progresses through the grades, it is important to introduce media usage slowly and judiciously. Additionally, we ask that families consider supporting the Wait Until 8th movement to delay student acquisition of a smartphone until 8th Grade or after (www.waituntil8th.org).

For detailed age-appropriate suggestions, please read the NCS Media Guidelines, which can be found on our website, or picked up in the office.

In addition to mindful exposure to screens, we ask that families support the school by providing children with a sustainable and rhythmical home life including maintaining a healthy diet and supporting ecological practices such as recycling and using reusable materials.

SCHOOL EVENTS

School Assemblies: Most of our school assemblies feature class performances. Parents are encouraged to attend (unless otherwise noted).

Back to School Night: Our annual all-school parent gathering to welcome everyone back to school and present highlights of the coming year followed by an all-school open house. (September)

Fall Festival: Our annual harvest festival. Class performances on the outdoor stage, followed by a community picnic.

Grandparents Day: Grandparents and special guests are invited to spend a day at school during which they attend an all-school assembly followed by classroom visits. (November)

Winter Spiral: Grades K-2. Each student walks a beautifully decorated spiral while carrying a candle.

Enchanted Garden: Our annual school auction party (adults only). (Spring)

Spring Festival: Students present Maypole dances, followed by a community picnic.

VISITOR POLICY

All visitors are required to check into the office and obtain a visitor's pass. If you are dropping off items, lunches, etc. or picking up your child early for an appointment, please go to the office and the office will help you. We ask that parents do not interrupt the classrooms during school hours.

ATTENDANCE AND TARDIES

Regular attendance and punctuality at school are very important so that your child can derive full benefit from the instructional program. Our school is primarily supported by state funding which is based on Average Daily Attendance (ADA) and not enrollment. Every day a child is absent (without being on Independent Study) costs the school approximately \$53. Therefore it is essential that your child attend school on a regular basis. Please plan your family vacations, holidays, etc. during school breaks. If your child is ill call the school office to report the absence. Inform the office staff the date(s) of absence, reasons for absence, and grade. If your child will be tardy to school due to pre-scheduled appointments, please notify the school office so he/she is not marked absent. Children who arrive late should report to the office first before going to class.

Absence Reporting

Please call (415)883-1719 to report an absence.

INDEPENDENT STUDY

If your child is absent, we can make arrangements for an independent study contract which will enable your child to stay abreast of schoolwork and allow the school to continue to receive necessary state funding. If at any time your plans require that your child be out of school for **five or more days**, please call us to obtain the necessary forms to initiate this process. **All independent study forms must be signed and dated before the absence occurs, and completed assignments must be turned into the office at the conclusion of the absence. Both of these conditions must be met in order to receive state ADA funding.** In order for the teacher to have time to develop a meaningful independent study program for your child during his/her absence, and for completion of the required paperwork, we suggest that you notify your child's teacher at least two weeks prior to the anticipated absence.

EARLY MORNING ARRIVALS

Please do not drop off your child before 8:15 A.M!

Students in grades 1-8 may wait for the morning bell on their classroom ramps. There is no before school supervision (except for children enrolled in the Before Care Program with Nettie's School Age Childcare.) Students are not allowed in the fields or play areas. There is no ball play or running around before school.

Kindergarten children only: Parents need to bring their child to the kindergarten yard by 8:35 a.m. Children must not be left unsupervised prior to the start of the school day. Kindergarten children start their school day with a morning circle promptly at 8:35 am. Parents are welcome to join the children in this activity. After the morning gathering children say their goodbyes and line up with their teachers.

AFTER SCHOOL PICK-UP

We appreciate all parents promptly picking up their children after school at 3:00 pm on regular days (Kindergarten 12:45 pm) and 1:00 pm on minimum days. There is no after-school supervision. All play areas are closed to after school play. Please pick Kindergarten children up from in front of the K Classrooms. 1st through 8th Grade Students will wait for parents in the dismissal area near the drop-off/pick-up lane. Parents may utilize the drop-off/pick-up off lane or park to collect their children. At 3:15 any remaining students will be brought to the office and parents will be contacted. (After School Child Care is only available to children who enroll with Nettie's School Age Childcare in advance.)

PARKING LOT SAFETY

Parking lot traffic congestion has been a persistent challenge. Parking or stopping in undesignated parking areas is not allowed and in some instances is illegal. Parking in fire lanes, the student drop-off areas, or in the middle of the drive-through poses a hazard to the children and adults who must walk through the lot to the school. In order to increase safety at drop-off and pick-up, it is important that all safety protocols are followed. When entering the parking area to pick up or drop off your child please enter with caution, stay in your vehicle in the

loading/pick-up area, or park in the designated parking spaces. If there are no spaces available in the loading area the cars must drive around the front of the school and line up in a north/south direction in front of North Bay Children’s Center. As the spaces open in the loading area cars may move forward one by one. **DO NOT BLOCK THE SOUTH ENTRANCE!**

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Student Medications

All prescription and over the counter medications must be current and accompanied by a physician and parent authorization. Please find the authorization form on our website or visit the front office. **(Please note that all student medications are discarded at the end of every school year.)**

LUNCH PROGRAM

Our school lunch program is administered and run by a parent committee as a fundraiser for school programs in need of funds. This program typically begins in October.

DIRECT COMMUNICATION

It is normal for questions to arise about various aspects of your child’s education as well as other matters that pertain to your child’s and your family’s involvement as community members. It is important that whenever possible, questions are asked using direct and clear communication. This begins by addressing questions at the point of origin.

If ever it is not clear who could best answer your question please contact the office for further direction. If you have gone to the point of origin and your remain unclear or are unsatisfied with the communication please contact the Director for further assistance.

Who to Talk to When....

Topic	Details	Who to Talk to
Pedagogy and unresolved matters	Whole school culture and pedagogy. Details you feel have not been resolved through direct communications.	Director
Business and operations	Communications - website, Facebook, Thread. Emergency preparedness and school safety. Volunteering. Fundraising. Enrollment. Campus improvement projects and maintenance.	Operations Manager

Student information	Student records and health. Attendance. School directory. Field trip chaperone requirements. Hospitality.	Office Manager
Finances	School finances	Board of Directors and Chief Financial Officer
Class funds, reimbursements, and pledges	Annual and class fund contributions. Expense reimbursements.	Bookkeeper
Student progress	Waldorf pedagogy - what we teach and why. Student overall progress and social experience.	Classroom Teacher
Student progress	Student experience and progress in specialty classes.	Specialty Teacher

SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

To promote communication between home and school, we have adopted a Monday Communication System. In order to reduce paper use, most communication is sent every Monday via email. Your child may bring home additional important information such as handouts, circulars, and forms needing parent signatures, on Mondays. Please review this information and be sure that your child returns any required forms to school ASAP. For two-parent households, we are happy to send weekly information to both. Please be sure that the office has all email and home addresses for mailings. You are also welcome to come into the office to pick up information at any time. Our weekly school newsletter, *The Thread*, goes out on Fridays.

Please note: It is critical that parent/teacher communication take place at appropriately designated times. It is unrealistic to expect that your child's teacher can give you their full attention at drop-off or pick-up. These are very hectic and busy times for teachers and their primary responsibility is still the children. In order to honor these transitional periods and each teacher's daily classroom preparation times, please schedule appointments with your child's teacher in advance. To make an appointment you are welcome to communicate directly with the teacher.

Email Communication and Etiquette

Email has become the most common medium to share school information. It allows for time-efficient, paper saving, group communication that you can keep as a record for future reference. It does, however, have drawbacks and limitations that can lead to unhealthy

communication. Topics of a sensitive or emotional nature are best communicated in person, or at a minimum on the phone. In person communication includes eye contact, tone of voice and other social cues allow for optimal clarification. To maximize the healthy use of email communication we ask that:

- Email is used to share information/notification vs. discussion or conversation.
- Please utilize the bcc function when sending emails to a group.
- Please do not utilize the “Reply all” function, but instead send emails only to those directly affected
- Please do not use email when a topic is emotionally charged. You can use email to request a meeting to discuss a sensitive topic.
- Please do not send group emails to promote private business endeavors or out of school activities.

Thank you for your support and understanding of healthy email communication.

STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM

Novato Charter School is committed to healthy relationships among students, teachers and all members of the school community. This value is reflected throughout the curriculum and implicit in the working of the school. To support this work, we have created a Student Support Team, which is comprised of three branches guided by three faculty members.

- Social Inclusion
- Support and Care
- Discipline and Guidance

STUDENT REPORTS

Oral reports on student progress are given to parents during parent-teacher conference week, which is typically held during the last week of October.

Kindergarten: A narrative progress report is mailed home at the end of the school year.

Notice to Parents: Progress reports sent out periodically to parents of students in Grades 1 - 8 to notify them of an area in need of attention in a student’s performance, habits or attendance.

Grades 1 - 5: Progress reports are mailed home twice a year: in February and at the end of the school year.

Grades 6 - 8: Progress reports are available online throughout the year using the Aeries Student Information System. End of term progress reports are mailed home twice a year: in February and at the end of the school year.

STATE TESTING

We participate in the annual Smarter Balanced assessment system, which is based on Common Core State Standards. These assessments are administered to grades 3 - 8 towards the end of the school year. Results are mailed to parents the following fall.

SCHOOL VERSE

This is our school
Let peace dwell here,
Let the rooms be full of contentment.
Let love abide here:
Love of one another.
Love of humankind,
Love of life itself.
Let us remember
That as many hands build a house,
So many hearts make a school.

SCHOOL POLICIES AND OTHER IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

The following documents are available on our website or can be picked up from the office.

Board Approved Policies

- Academic Integrity Policy
- Dress Code Policy
- Field Trip Policy
- Independent Study Policy
- Internal Complaint Policy
- Novato Charter School Enrollment Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Suicide Prevention Policy
- Uniform Complaint Policy

(All board approved policies can be found on our website at <http://www.novatocharterschool.org/board/board-policies/>)

Other Important Documents

- Child Find Notification
- Lice Protocol and Guidelines
- Media Guidelines
- Middle School Student and Parent Guide
- Middle School Technology Use Agreement
- NCS Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws
- New Immunization Law
- Non-Discrimination Statement
- School and Family Partnership Agreement
- Title IX: Prohibiting Sex-based Discrimination