



2011-2012
Parent Handbook

Contact Information

Susan Odell Taylor School

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Kate Gregg

Kindergarten Teacher

Janice Cristiano

1/2 Teacher

Jennifer Philbin

1/2 Literacy/Math

Barbara McNamee

3/4 Teacher

Lara Hotaling

5/6 Teacher

Lianne Adams

Art Teacher

Ellen Crane

Music Teacher

Susan Loiacono

Math Teacher

Ralph Fahnstock

Spanish Instruction

Hola-La

**Physical Education
Teacher**

Dan Wehle

Yoga Teacher

Toni Smith

Assistants

Lynn Beliveau

Aftercare/ Beforecare

Sara Howell, Allison Bishop,

Ansley Chlastawa, Kristy

Thomas, Meagan Farrell



Educational Philosophy

“Nurturing Joyful Learners”

The following principles serve as the philosophical foundation for the [Susan Odell Taylor School](#). In embracing these ideas, those affiliated with the Taylor School form a community that supports and enriches children's lives.

- The development of a steadfast sense of self is paramount to each child's educational experience. Through their experiences, the children will come to know and understand themselves in ways that are personal and unique. Each child will be encouraged to develop a sense of trust, a sense of competence, and a sense of initiative. Positive self-esteem and self-confidence will be nurtured within each student.
- How the children learn is as important as what they learn. The process of learning holds as much value as the specific content being learned. It is through the learning process that children develop strategies and skills that can be applied to understanding new content and gaining new knowledge.
- Knowing the children we teach individually, culturally and developmentally is as important as knowing the content we teach. We will strive to understand the children individually, recognizing that all have personal strengths, challenges, and circumstances that affect who they are and how they learn. The better we know the children, the more we can do to support them in their daily lives.
- Each child will have the opportunity to reach her/his highest potential within a safe and nurturing environment. Each child will be guided socially, emotionally and academically toward greater accomplishments. The learning environment will foster a sense of security and support as the children take the risks necessary for the development of new understandings about themselves and the world in which they live.
- The learning environment will be experiential - fostering curiosity and creativity, while instilling a love of learning. Children will be actively engaged in learning, with an emphasis on hands-on experiences, mentally stimulating situations and collaborative learning. Learning will be purposeful, exciting, enjoyable and satisfying.
- Emphasis will be placed on academic rigor within the friendly atmosphere of a caring community of learners. Our emphasis is on fostering children's creativity and curiosity while enabling them to become highly literate students with strong mathematical, scientific, and social understandings that will give them the ability to pursue any future course of study. An important goal of our curriculum is to work on deeper understandings within subject areas rather than attempting to cover a large amount of content in a superficial manner.
- Parental and community interaction will be an integral part of the school's success. The school will value parents and the community, recognizing that cultivating partnerships with each will serve to enrich our students' lives. We will welcome parents and community members into our school environment and strive to reach out and be a part of the community at large. Because learning can and should occur beyond the academic walls, we believe the children will benefit in many ways from their experiences outside of the school environment.

Diversity Statement

[The Susan Odell Taylor School for Children](#) values diversity. We are committed to reflecting the diversity of our community. We believe a culturally diverse community of people displays a range of origins, thought processes, talents, experiences, and abilities that, like diversity itself, is always changing.

Our School Day

8:30 am School Day Begins

3:20 pm Dismissal

- All classrooms will open at 8:30 am.
- Teachers are in their rooms to welcome students and families at 8:30 am
- The keypad will work prior to 8:30 am. Prior to 8:30 am children must be supervised by the adults who brought them to school. Members of our community are welcome to visit with each other in the entrance hall or at the cubbies while waiting for classrooms to open at 8:30 am
- Children who ride the bus and arrive before 8:30 am will go to before care without a fee. All other children who go to before care prior to 8:30 am will be charged. The Common Room will only be open to those children who are in before care.
- Children in kindergarten through sixth grade who arrive after 8:40 am are considered tardy and should go to the office accompanied by the adult who brought them to school. The adult will provide a written reason for the late arrival. Forms will be provided. The form will be forwarded to the classroom teacher to ensure an accurate attendance record.
- Families of children who are absent or tardy from school more than 10 days per semester will be contacted by the Head of School.

Parent/School Communication

"School News" E-Communications are emailed bi-weekly and include information on school news and events for the week as well as reminders of upcoming events and deadlines.

We like to use email to communicate with you. Please be sure to provide us with your email address. Please use the Taylor School website to access information.

Please note: Please do not use parent email list for anything other than school business.

Memos, reminders and announcements will also be placed in your child's "home" folder and put into her/his backpack. We ask that you review the home folder every night as sometimes notices are time sensitive and request a reply. Youngest siblings will get notices in an effort to save paper.

Teachers can be reached by phone during the day or by a note in your child's "home" folder. If a teacher is unavailable when you call, leave a message with Mariann and your call will be returned as soon as possible.

The PTO

The Susan Odell Taylor School for Children Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is a volunteer organization which adds to the excellence of our school through positive actions supporting students, faculty, curriculum and the administration. We are dedicated to strengthening the school community, promoting school spirit, and advocating for families.

PTO Volunteer Philosophy

We are a volunteer driven organization focused on encouraging each person in the community to become involved by matching available time and talents with jobs that need to be done.

Parent/School Partnership

At the [Susan Odell Taylor School](#) it is very important that there be mutual respect and a clear understanding of expectations for both parents and the school. This partnership reinforces our mutual goals for the education of the students of the Taylor School.

The people who work at the Taylor School aspire to:

- Cultivate and nurture the school community.
- Attract and support exceptional faculty and staff dedicated to academic and socio-emotional development.
- Provide a safe and secure environment that nurtures joyful learners.
- Communicate pertinent information regarding policies, procedures, curriculum and activities on a regular and timely basis.
- Model integrity and respect in all contacts with parents and students.
- Address concerns that parents may have in a timely manner.
- Encourage parents to become actively involved in school activities.

The parents at the Taylor School aspire to:

- Support the mission and the policies of the school.
- Act as a positive role model for the children and for other parents.
- Bring children to school and pick them up on time.
- Enable children to attend as many school days as fully, as actively and as prepared as possible.
- Support the efforts of the PTO and attend as many school events as possible.
- Express concerns appropriately to the right person in a timely manner.
- Keep other children and faculty healthy by not bringing sick children to school.
- Help children gain independence by encouraging self-help skills.

Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays are very important to young children. Your child is welcome to bring a birthday snack to share with her/his class during snack or lunchtime. Peanut-free finger foods such as cookies or cupcakes are most appropriate. Cakes, candles, or birthday favors may not be brought into school. Please discuss your plans with your child's teacher ahead of time to ensure that any dietary restrictions are considered.

The Taylor School has a tradition in which the birthday child may give a book to the library in honor of her/his birthday. The book is introduced to your child's classroom and circulated to all other classes. Children enjoy choosing the "perfect book" to share with their peers and are proud to have it inscribed with their name.

Please note: Young children are very aware of impending parties. Please mail invitations rather than deliver them in school. You can help allay hurt feelings by encouraging your child not to discuss party plans at school.

Lunch

Each child needs to bring in a lunch that includes a drink (if not ordering milk). We ask that you try to send in containers and/or packaging that your child can manage independently. We offer a hot lunch option provided by Carol's Place. Monthly menus will be sent home with students. If a child arrives at school without a lunch, he/she will be given cheerios and milk for lunch.

Parking Lot Procedures

Please remember that these procedures have been designed to ensure student safety in the parking lot. It is vitally important that parents supervise their children carefully in the parking lot at all times.

Spaces in front of the building

Parking is allowed in these spaces except:

- 8:00 – 8:45 a.m.

and

- 3:00 – 3:45 p.m.

This gives the buses more room to maneuver without backing up, and reduces the possibility of a car backing up while a child may be in the parking lot.

Pedestrian Walkways

There are two pedestrian walkways marked by yellow stripes on either side of the parking lot. The teachers will be parking in the far lot to allow more parking for drop off.

Please escort your children from your car to the walkways when they can move safely to the sidewalks and enter the building. This is also true if your children are arriving by bike, scooter, or walking.

Please do not drive over the walkways so they remain safe for pedestrians.

Drop off/ pick up lane

This lane is now clearly marked in the parking lot. The space to the left of the lane is for people who are parking their cars or buses that need to move through. Please note the no parking zone at the end of the median to allow enough room for this.

For parents dropping their children directly from their car in the morning:

- Stay in the lane until you can move your car up to the spot in front of the sidewalk and front entranceway.
- Do not let your child exit your vehicle unless they can step directly onto the yellow zone next to the sidewalk. If there is a line, please wait your turn.

For parents picking up at regular dismissal;

- Stay in the lane and move forward to the yellow walkway in front of the school.
- A teacher will escort your child to your car.

Parents using before care and aftercare may park in the front lots as long as it is before 8:00 a.m. and after 3:45 p.m.

Enrichment

We believe in enriching the children's learning with art, music, movement, and athletics as much as possible. This is especially powerful when these activities are linked with current themes in which the children are involved in. If you have a connection to someone in the community who can enrich our learning, please let us know. In addition to these opportunities, we have adjunct teachers who will regularly teach Spanish, Music, Art and Physical Education.

After school enrichment programs will be offered in the fall, winter, and spring. Program information and registration forms will be emailed.

Before and Aftercare

Before care and aftercare are available whenever school is in session. You can use these services daily or on an as needed basis. Before care is available from 7:15 – 8:30 am. The cost is \$8 each time you use before care. Aftercare is available to families from dismissal to 6:00 pm. The cost is \$10 each time you use aftercare. There are annual rates for before and after-care as well. Aftercare/Before care bills are sent out at the end of each month. Failure to pay an aftercare or before care bill within 30 days will result in no longer being able to access this service for your child and a late payment charge of \$25.00. If you do not pick up your child by 6:00pm, a late fee of \$15 per family will be charged. This fee will be due with your aftercare bill each month.

Progress Reports

Progress reports present a comprehensive picture of your child at certain points during the school year. Progress reports are sent out according to the following schedule:

Kindergarten–6th grade: November, March and June

Pre Kindergarten: January and June

Preschool: June

Please note: The school will only release student records to other schools when the final tuition balance is paid.

Conferences

Communication between home and school is an important element of a child's education. Parents with concerns are encouraged to contact their child's teacher by phone or email. Additionally, the following formal conference days have been planned:

Wednesday, November 9 from 4:00 pm–7:00 pm/

Thursday, November 10 from 8:00 am–noon

Thursday, March 15 from 4:00 pm – 7:00 pm/

Friday March 16 from 8:00 am - noon

Please note: Childcare is provided while you are in your conference. There is no school on 11/10 or 3/16. Every effort to provide childcare (for a fee) will be made on these dates.

Homework

Students in kindergarten through sixth grade will be given homework on a regular basis. Homework can fulfill a variety of purposes, such as: reinforcement of skills, extension of classroom learning, enrichment of academics, and the development of productive study habits. The number and type of assignments will be influenced by the curriculum and the needs of the students, and will vary at the discretion of the classroom teacher.

Homework also provides a structure for regular teacher, parent, and student dialogue. Parents should review homework assignments with their children, giving support and guidance as needed.

It is important that your child's homework experience be a positive one. If you have concerns about your child's homework, please contact her/his teacher.

Stanford Achievement Test

In May, students in grades 3-6 will take the Stanford Achievement Test. We have chosen to use the Stanford Achievement test because it is the oldest and most widely used of a half-dozen or so nation-wide tests, which virtually all do the same thing. ITBS, CAT, Terra Nova, or Stanford all give us an idea of how our students are performing in comparison to students throughout the entire country. At the Taylor School, we do not spend time "teaching to a test." We feel our time can be better spent engaged in active learning experiences, so we simply teach our curriculum for the year, which fully prepares the children for the test.

Toys at School

Young children are learning to share their belongings and sometimes have difficulty in this area. It is also very upsetting if something is lost or broken at school. We ask that children refrain from bringing personal items (toys, jewelry, computers, hand held toys) to school. Individual teachers will set their own policies for "show & tell" items. No guns or weapons of any kind are allowed in school.

Snacks and Food in School

We feel it is important for the children to take a nutritional break each morning to fuel their minds and bodies. The Taylor School will continue to have a snack break each morning in all of our classrooms. We will continue to provide a snack to children in preschool and prekindergarten, as we have done in the past. However, we will no longer be providing snack to children in kindergarten through sixth grade. Nutritional, fiscal, and logistical factors informed this decision. Please plan to send in a snack that meets your child's preferences, in terms of type and amount of snack. Pretzels and goldfish will no longer be available.

Please respect the following guidelines regarding snacks from home:

- Snacks must be peanut-free.
- Snacks must be healthy.
- Snacks may not be shared or traded.
- Snacks must be easy to eat and clean up.
- If snack food is packed with lunch food, some children may need to be told what food is to be eaten at snack.

Acceptable Snacks: fruit, whole-grain bread with jam, cheese, granola bars, dried fruit, vegetables & dip, half of a sandwich.

Unacceptable Snacks: foods that contain peanut products, cookies, candy, pudding, donuts, fruit roll-ups, potato chips.

Please note: Children who attend aftercare will be given an afternoon snack and do not need an additional snack sent from home.

Field Trips

In order to enrich classroom studies, each class takes several trips a year. A release form must be signed before your child goes on a field trip. This form was sent home with the summer mailing. All release forms will be kept in the office and parents will be notified in advance of specific field trip plans. We occasionally ask parents to help volunteer for field trips and help with transportation.

Medications

If you are planning on the school dispensing prescription medication, please ask your doctor to order medication in separate labeled containers for home and school.

Children cannot self-administer medication. All medication (over the counter or prescribed) should be labeled with your child's name & specific dosage instructions. Medications should be delivered by the parent to the office. The school will need a doctor's note in order to administer any medication, including over the counter medication.

Transportation

The children arrive and depart using a variety of transportation systems. Please be sure to send a note with your child if her/his transportation will be different than normal.

If something unexpected arises, please contact the office before 1:00 pm. Also, please notify your transportation department if your child is not taking the bus to or from school so the bus is not waiting for your child.

If you frequently have other people picking up your child, please complete the alternate pick up form, giving the school permission to release your child to the people you have identified.

School Care Plan for Peanut Allergy

The following outlines the responsibilities that the [Susan Odell Taylor School](#) will accept on behalf of a student with a life-threatening allergy to peanuts. It should be understood that while every possible attempt will be made to follow these guidelines, it may be impossible for the school to control the environment to the extent that it is "peanut-free". However, the school is committed to providing a "peanut-controlled" environment.

- The School will educate its community regarding peanut allergies and the seriousness of this condition. Additionally, the faculty and staff will participate in yearly training about the ways to treat reactions to severe/life-threatening allergies.
- The student's care plan will be posted in her/his classroom, the Common Room, the After-care notebook, and in the kitchen.
- There will be a peanut-controlled table in the cafeteria. The lunchroom staff will check the lunches of all children who sit at this table for peanut products and ask any children who do have these products in their lunches to sit elsewhere.
- There will be a strongly enforced rule that there will be no food-sharing amongst the children.
- The school will not knowingly purchase any foods containing peanuts or peanut by-products. In aftercare, before care and childcare, the only snacks allowed will be those provided by the school.
- School-wide functions will be peanut-controlled. Any request for foods from home will state that the food should be free of peanuts and peanut by-products.

Clothing/Backpacks

In our active, hands-on environment, the children will be engaging in daily experiences with art, music, science experiments, the playground, and gym. They need to be free to paint, dance, and run without being confined by the clothes they wear to school. The children will do best in comfortable, functional clothing and sturdy shoes. "Party" shoes and sandals are discouraged, as they are not safe for active outdoor play. We go outside at least once every day – more if we can! Your child should be equipped for changes in the weather. Sometimes a beautiful, warm morning can turn into a chilly afternoon.

Each child needs to have a labeled shoebox containing a complete change of clothes. Parents need to replace clothing that is sent home, as well as make seasonal changes. Additional hats and mittens can be kept in the child's cubby. All outerwear should be marked with the child's name. Please, no umbrellas or scarves for safety reasons.

Individual teachers may have specific rules about acceptable head gear in their classroom.

Your child will need a backpack or canvas bag every day, even if there is nothing to pack in the morning. Frequently there are things to send home at the end of the day and it is difficult for the children to manage loose items. Please be sure to check your child's backpack or home folder every night for communications from teacher or school.



Health Regulations

It is mandatory that each child has on file a current and complete health record signed by a physician and parent. New York State law requires that the immunization record be completed and on file within two weeks of the start of school. Health forms were included in the summer mailing.

Please keep children home from school if they are not able to play outside, have a cold or fever, or a communicable disease. We cannot guarantee that there will be an adult available to supervise a recuperating child during recess. If your child has a contagious condition, please notify us immediately.

Please call school if your child is absent. We will call to check on children who normally take the bus if we haven't heard from you by 9:30. In the event that your child becomes sick at school, we will telephone and request that you pick up your child.

Infection Prevention

The school has procedures to reduce the risk of children spreading illnesses to each other. They are:

- Teaching children to wash their hands often with soap and water. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers will be used if hand washing is unavailable. Faculty and staff will set a good example by doing this themselves. The children will be monitored closely during times when groups of children are washing hands.
- Teaching children not to share personal items like drinks, food or unwashed utensils.
- Teaching children to cover up their coughs or sneezes using the elbow, arm or sleeve instead of the hand when a tissue is unavailable.
- Teaching children to properly dispose of tissues.
- Use of foam soap dispensers at all sink areas.
- Additional use of sanitizing wipes in the classrooms and common areas throughout the day.
- Keeping sick children at home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have fever or do not have signs of fever, without using fever-reducing drugs. A child with a severe cough should also stay home. Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected.
- Do not send children to school if they are sick. Any children who are determined to be sick while at school will be sent home. We will need to have sick children picked up within an hour of receiving a call. Please make a family plan to be prepared for this possibility.

Lice Policy

If a child is identified as having head lice in school, the parents will be called to pick the child up. Parents will be informed of the proper treatment for head lice and will be instructed on removal of nits and treating the household environment. An information sheet on head lice, which includes treatment instructions, will be sent home. Children with head lice will be required to remain home until they receive treatment and no longer exhibit the presence of live lice or the presence of nits (eggs). The school nurse will check students for the absence of lice and nits in the office upon re-admittance to school. Please be sure to notify the school if you detect head lice on your child. We can reduce the number of cases in our school if we work in a cooperative manner.

Snow Days

When the weather is stormy or the roads are treacherous, we sometimes close school. Information on school closings can be obtained by listening to local radio and TV stations as early as 6:30 am.

Internet: Times Union school closings

Television: WRGB – Channel 6 Radio: WTRY, WROW; WNYT – Channel 13 WGY (99.5 River); WTEN - Channel 10; Channel 9 News

Fundraising for Our School

Tuition does not pay the entire costs of running a small, independent school like the Susan Odell Taylor School.

It is not a requirement that families help us to raise additional funds; however, it is something we hope every family will help with as best they can. This is not simply about giving money to the school. Our goal is to provide families with a variety of ways they can contribute depending on their resources, time and energy. Here are some of the ways that your extended family and friends can help raise money for the school.

Annual Appeal

Kicked off in September and lasting until January. Donors have a choice to give to the general operating, library fund, financial aid or our endowment fund.

BoxTops for Education

Save those box tops from General Mills and we can turn them in for cash. There is a can in the office or just send them in with your child's folder.

Bottle Return

The PTO collects returnable bottles in the large black bins by the pool. This money goes towards the enrichment fund.

Target Education Fund

This store will give the school a small percentage of your purchases with the store credit card. You simply need to designate the school as the recipient of these funds. Our ID # is 115-551.

Price Chopper Tools for Schools

Every year from September to December this company counts your purchases towards points that the school can use to get supplies for the school. Just sign up your Advantage card at a local store or online. This does not need to be done every year and automatically gets carried onto the next school year.

Campbell Soup Labels

Please turn in your soup labels for redemption towards art supplies.

PTO fundraising

The PTO has periodic fund raisers such as mum/pumpkin/wreath sales, SCRIP, and Montessori catalogue sales. The funds raised are for items that the school has requested for the students such as science or playground equipment.

Thank you to ALL parents and community friends who help make our fundraising efforts a success!

Thank You!

Thank you for the opportunity to teach your children. Please call, email or schedule a meeting with us anytime to discuss your child's needs, planning for next year or simply to share your thoughts and ideas.

Taylor School Annual Events 2011-2012

September 6, 2011, 6pm

Back to School Picnic

New and returning families share a potluck dinner to kick-off the upcoming school year.

September 26, 2011, 6pm

Curriculum Night

This evening is an opportunity to spend time in your child's classroom and find out the teacher's goals and plans for the year. Parent – teacher – student communication strategies will also be discussed.

October 1, 2011, 10am

Race for the Cure Family Walk

This is a new event for the school this year. Families can walk or stroll a mile to raise awareness and funds to fight breast cancer.

October 29, 2011

Family Fun Day

The families get together at the school for fun fall activities and healthy snacks.

November 22, 2011

Harvest Feast

The Taylor School community comes together to give thanks for the bounty of the harvest through food and song. The students prepare side dishes of muffins, breads and vegetables to share to accompany their lunches. We have two sittings, with younger students and their families going first, and the older students and their families following.

December 15, 2011

Winter Festival

A night celebrating your child's giving spirit with family crafts, music and refreshments.

January 2012 (TBA)

Taylor School Family Ski Day

Alleviate cabin fever with a family ski outing at Pine Ridge Cross Country Ski Lodge. A special group rate is available.

March 6, 2012 (evening event)

Math Night

A fun and informative night designed for families to play math games and explore math concepts together.

April 2012 (date subject to

author availability)

Pajama Read In Day

This day is a Taylor School tradition with tons of reading fun. Students are encouraged to wear pajamas and bring in a favorite book for a school wide "read-in." A pancake lunch is served followed by a local author visit.

April 26, 2012

Earth Day

Families are invited to usher in spring with the Taylor School. Join us for planting around the campus and preparation of the Taylor School garden.

May 2012 (TBA)

Teacher Appreciation Lunch

A gourmet lunch hosted by the PTO served to our dedicated staff. Children are asked to bring a small token of appreciation in the form of a flower, weed or branch for the faculty and staff.

May 2012 (TBA)

Annual Celebration Fundraiser and Auction

This gathering of families, alumni and friends of the Taylor School is a celebration of all the school's accomplishments and a chance to raise valuable funds to support the school. Everyone can find a way to participate in this event.

May 24, 2012

Country Parade

Individual and classroom theme-based activities for all ages will be on display in classrooms. Each classroom will study a different country and display their learning along with food from each country.

June 13, 2012

Kick Ball Tournament

Students and staff engage in a friendly game of kick ball followed by a hot dog lunch.

June 15, 2012 (after moving up ceremonies)

End of Year Picnic

Families share a potluck picnic at Prospect Park in Troy to celebrate the success of another school year.