



Small Steps Towards a Big Difference

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Dear Parents,

Welcome forward to another amazing new year! We are pioneering into the future again with the homeschoolers at Hilltop Hanover Farm...

Towards having a really successful school experience together at the Farm, we'd like to present some information, offer suggestions, and make some important requests for everyone's safety and well being. If you have any questions about the following information, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Telephone

In case of emergencies, you can reach Barbara at HH Farm on her cell phone: 914-217-9249 or Ridvan at: 914-325-1053. You can also reach Holly on her cell phone: 914-714-2281. There is a phone in the office at the Farm, but it would not be a good idea to leave messages on the voicemail there, unless it is a major emergency: 914-962-2368. The farm manager's name is Lucille Munz and the program manager is Kirsten Brophy. One of them is usually on site, but not always available to answer the phone or get messages to us.

On Site

If you need to stay around the Farm for any reason, we would recommend hiking the trails across the street. We have found through experience that it is often too distracting for children to have their parents in the building while we have class. Another suggestion would be to travel a mile up Hanover St. where you will find the center of Yorktown, with Starbucks, Mrs. Green's, and other stores, as well as a really nice bike trailway.

Clothing and Equipment

Please be sure that your child has adequate clothes for the weather, since we will be spending lots of time outdoors: jackets, sweaters, long pants, socks, raingear, waterproof boots, and a pair of indoor slippers are all strongly recommended. Also, we have found that often children need an extra set of clothes on hand. This way, if your child happens to get wet or muddy, they have something at the Farm to change into. Extra clothes and shoes can be kept in cubbies or closets. We have experienced that a cold, wet child is an unhappy child, and it would help the teachers a lot if parents could make sure that children have what they need for the weather.

Snacks and Lunch

Children will need to bring a lunch and an afternoon snack with them each day. You may keep your child's snack or lunch in the fridge if you wish. We would ask that parents pack only healthy foods, and we would suggest packing even a little more than you think your child might need, because if they are hungry, this can cause distress for everyone. It is our policy not to allow candy of any kind (including gum), and we would greatly appreciate it if you would not send your child with sugary treats. There are children with special diets and it can become uncomfortable when someone is sharing a snack that others cannot eat. If it is a birthday celebration, we recommend sharing fruit, or to try to find cookies or cakes that are not overly sweet.

Volunteering

While at the Farm, volunteer assistance is always needed. Please do feel free to take up any task that you see needs doing at any time, especially at the end of the school day: washing dishes, cleaning, taking out the garbage, weeding, watering, etc.

Also, if you have a special skill, profession, or hobby that you would like to share with our students, please let us know, because we love to have visiting educators to share their expertise.

Drop Off and Pick Up

This is the one area where parents can help us out the most! Please be on time to bring your children to school and to pick them up. When children arrive late, they feel out of sorts and it can be hard for them to make the transition into an ongoing class. We suggest arriving even a little bit early, so they have time to play outdoors or take care of the chickens or visit the sheep before class begins.

At the end of the day, it is very important to your child that you arrive on time. Students may have work they want to share with you, or a new skill to show you, and it can be hard for young children when parents are late or rushed. Equally important at the end of the day, if your child wishes to continue to play, that you are supervising this play outdoors. Barbara, Holly, and Ridvan have a lot to do to clean up and close up at the end of the day, and they cannot supervise the children. Also, we have found that young children are often tired by the end of the day, and it would be better to leave the Farm. So many times, we have seen that emotional upsets and physical injuries tend to happen after school, when children are tired. If you pick them up on time and leave soon after, they will end what may have been a very happy day in a harmonious way.

Please do not drop your child off by letting them out of the car. We ask that you park and walk your child all the way into the front door. In case we are out in the field, we never want your child to be left alone. Similarly, at the end of the day, please park and walk into the building to pick your child up (or find us around back in the garden). We never want to allow children to run into the road to find you, and we have seen children tempted to do just this.

Children are never permitted to visit the sheep without an adult to accompany them. Thank you for your help in all of this!

Parking

When parking, please be mindful of all the other groups that use the Farm and be sure not to block anyone in. It is suggested to park uphill by the barns, where there is plenty of space, rather than in front of the Main Residence. There is now a small, gravel parking area in front of the farmhouse, but we don't want to take up all the space there as it is for all the farm visitors. It is no longer permitted to park along the road, as trucks are often busy entering and exiting, and during our pick up and drop off times, the area is likely to be quite busy.

The Buildings

The "*Finders of Knowledge*" will primarily meet in classrooms inside of the "little house," Building "C," also known as the Children's Environmental Education Center. The entrance to the building will be through the kitchen, which is the door all the way to the left.

The "*Discoverers of the Ways of the Planet*" and the "*Makers of the Mosaic*" will meet mostly in the Main Residence, the "farmhouse," which is Building "A." Please enter and exit the Main Residence through the left front door of the house primarily, not through the kitchen, as other groups may be using the other rooms from time to time.

Emergency Plans

If there is a weather emergency at the Farm, such as high winds and heavy rains, the children will all be inside of Building A, the Main Residence, as this building is considered to be safer in such conditions.

Of course, if severe weather is predicted in advance, we would cancel school. But if a storm were to come up unexpectedly at the end of a school day, we would recommend that children and parents stay safely inside of the buildings, and that parents not attempt to drive until the storm has passed.

Snow Days

For the most part, we will follow the local Yorktown school district in terms of determining school closings. Sometimes, if there is an early dismissal, we will still finish out our day, because public schools tend to close early for busing reasons. However, if there is a delayed start to the day, we might follow this, since the roads would not be clear enough to travel safely. In our minds, it is always up to the individual families to decide if they wish to travel to and from school when snow is predicted. We will always err on the side of caution.

If there is a storm predicted, and schools are planning to close in advance, we will send out a phone message to all of the families in advance to let you know. If you are unsure on a given day whether to travel to school or not, please feel free to call us.

Health Concerns

Please do not send your child to school if s/he is showing signs of illness. This is especially true for contagious illnesses such as conjunctivitis (pink eye) or head lice or stomach viruses. We want to keep everyone as healthy as possible, children and teachers alike, and we firmly believe that the best place for a child to get well is at home.

Please be aware that teachers are not allowed to give children any medications, including homeopathic remedies, nor are we permitted to apply insect repellent or sunscreen. We are only able to conduct basic first aid (i.e., band-aids, cold packs). If we are concerned that your child may be unwell or has been severely injured, we will immediately contact you to come and pick up your child. In a medical emergency, we are required to call 911, and we will then contact the parents.

Lateness or Absence

We would greatly appreciate it if you would call us in advance if you are going to be late or if your child will be missing school.

About the Earth School Staff

We'd like to introduce you to this year's staff of amazing educators. One thing they all have in common is that they do a LOT besides teaching Earth School.

Barbara Sarbin is the Director of Educational Programs for Something Good in the World at Hilltop Hanover Farm. What this means is that she is responsible for the overall running of educational programs, including not only the Earth School programs for homeschoolers, but also those for public schools, for afterschool, and all of the other SGITW projects that take place at the farm: the Blue Star Youth Movement, the Children's Peaceful Garden, the Sounds Good Music for Families workshops, and the Turtle Island Summer Camp.

Barbara is the main teacher for the Discoverers of the Ways of the Planet and for the Makers of the Mosaic. She is also teaching Words in Color for the Finders of Knowledge, and is overseeing the curriculum for this age group.

Barbara has a BA in Theatre Arts with Honors from Brown University. She performed extensively as a professional actress and movement theatre artist, and has worked as an Artist-in-Residence in New York area public and private schools for over 20 years. For the past four years, she developed the Golden Education Template (GET) curriculum for Elementary grades, and has been teaching homeschooled children inside of an "Earth School" environment since 1999.

Ridvan Foxhall is the main teacher for the Finders of Knowledge. She has two children in Earth School, and she is also a homeschooling parent. Ridvan has a Bachelors Degree in Art and Photography with Honors from City University of NYC. She has worked as a graphic designer for over 12 years, and as the program director and administrator for New Era Elementary School in Nigeria. For over 15 years she has developed and taught virtues programs to children ages 4-15 and more recently, African dance, art and drama. Ridvan assisted Barbara for the past two years in the Virtuous Company and Seekers of Cohesion classes, and has participated in numerous GET teacher training seminars and workshops. She is currently engaged in training to become an occupational therapist, and she is one of the founders of the Children's Theater Company in Peekskill.

Holly Stagliano is the assistant teacher for the Discoverers of the Ways of the Planet, and she is also on hand to assist the Finders of Knowledge as needed. Holly also has two children enrolled in Earth School, and is a homeschool mom. Holly graduated from Bowling Green State University with a degree in Arts and Science, and continued her studies at FIT in NYC, for a degree in fashion and merchandising. She has her own hand-made children's clothing company called "Nolly Designs." For the past two years, Holly was an assistant teacher for ages 2-6, and she has attended numerous GET teacher training seminars and workshops.

Gayle Lamb is our venerated art teacher for both the Discoverers of the Ways of the Planet and the Finders of Knowledge classes on Wednesday mornings. Both classes will be aligned to the age and curriculum needs of the students, integrated with their "lump-learning" themes. Gayle has a Bachelors of Science degree in Textile Design, and over 17 years experiences as Design Director for textile corporations in NYC. Gayle works as the Executive Director at the Croton/Cortlandt Center for the Arts, teaching art classes as part of their in-house programs, as well as in public and private schools. She has been teaching inside of the GET school environment for the past five years, for ages 4-11.

Margaret Von Der Meden is joining our staff as the Crafts teacher on Monday mornings. Many of you may know her from our "Life on the Farm" afterschool programs and our Turtle Island camp. Margaret graduated from Cologne University in Germany, and is known for her work with "2 Hands 2 Learn," which are arts-integrated programs in the

public schools. She is extremely knowledgeable about gardening and farm animals and we are delighted to have her working with us.

Susan Cody is our new music teacher for both the Discoverers of the Ways of the Planet and the Finders of Knowledge classes on Friday mornings. She will be focusing on choral work with the older children, and singing and rhythm with the younger ones. Susan has a degree in Music Education from Ithaca College, and conducts private music instruction in piano, flute, and voice. Susan is the musical director of the Children's Theater Company of Peekskill, and has two grandchildren in Earth School.

William Geise will be teaching an Art and Design in Nature class to the Makers of the Mosaic on Thursday afternoons, with his own inimitable style that combines movement, teamwork, and improvisation with environmental art. William received his training at the School for Visual Arts in NYC. He is an accomplished illustrator, having worked most recently with Maurice Sendak. William taught at Turtle Island camp with us this past summer, and has been a teacher of ages 4-64 at the Wooster Community Art Center in Danbury for 12 years, as well as for many afterschool and summer arts programs. He specializes in using materials made from what can be found in nature.

In addition to our regular, weekly staff, we have a whole host of consultants and helpers on hand with special skills. **Sara Garcia** has been our educational consultant since the beginning of SGITW, holding teaching certifications in regular, special education, and bi-lingual education in Spanish, with her special expertise in the area of children with learning differences. **Arthur Powell**, a professor of mathematics at Rutgers University, will be training our staff this year in the Gattegno math method. We also work with **Shakti Gattegno** at the Bronx Charter School for Better Learning, for training in the area of Words in Color, our reading method. This year, **Jennifer Terranova**, who is trained as a pediatric occupational therapist, has offered to come and teach the Handwriting Without Tears method to the Finders of Knowledge class. We will call upon the skills of **Lenora DeSanctis**, a certified teacher with a penchant for mathematics, for periodic math workshops for the Discoverers of the Ways of the Planet. Other homeschooling parents and local teachers and professionals will volunteer throughout the year, whenever help is needed, and when they have a special skill to share.

We really have a special and talented staff and community of volunteers, and we hope you will get to know them all this year!

Communications

Barbara and Ridvan will each produce twice-monthly reports for parents that will be sent out by email, and are intended to help homeschooling families to follow-up or supplement the curriculum at home. If you have any questions or concerns about the work being done in school, or your child's progress, we are always open to communicating. There are two parent-teacher meetings that will be held during the school year, one in November and one in March.

We ask that you please try to understand if some days the teachers are very busy and can't talk, or aren't able to give parents their full attention at the end of the school day. We recommend communicating with teachers by emailing, or calling them at home after 5 p.m., but not later than 9 p.m. If there is a serious matter to discuss, it's always best to set up a private meeting in person.

Thank you all for your participation and support. We're looking forward to another great new chapter in our adventure together...

Warmly,

☺ Barbara, Ridvan, and Holly