



COMMUNITY HANDBOOK

2019-2020

The Community Handbook serves as a guide for school families to reference the vision, philosophy, policies and procedures at Verdi EcoSchool. As a living document, the Community Handbook is constantly evolving to reflect the needs of our school community.

Please take the time to read this document in its entirety.

Updated digital download with live links available at:

www.verdiecoschool.org/parents

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MISSION

The Verdi EcoSchool educates children for an entrepreneurial future through an immersive, hands-on learning environment steeped in nature, sustainability, science and the arts. Our student led philosophy will inspire and empower the next generation of creative leaders and innovative thinkers.

OVERVIEW

The place-based education philosophy envisions the immediate environment as the student's most important classroom. An education that is rooted in what is tangible and what is unique to our own community provides the foundation for all learning to come.

The Eau Gallie Arts District is our campus and our interdisciplinary program seeks to create an awareness of the ecosystem in which we live, learn and interact. Our urban farm is located at the center of the district and serves as both a community gathering place and demonstration site of our student's work. We believe that immersion in outdoor environments offers the ideal setting for a child to develop freely and learn enthusiastically.

At the Verdi EcoSchool we aim to provide room for possibility rather than attempt to constrain children's interests to fit within the boundaries of a certain curriculum.

Our goal is to facilitate the growth of innovative thinkers and responsible stewards of the earth who can create lasting contributions to the evolution of our society. We want our students to have respect for all cultures and environments and a deep desire to engage with their communities.

By emphasizing the development of self-regulation, self-direction, and self-reflection, we hope to provide our students with the educational foundation that will support them for the rest of their lives. We value the relationship between the school community and family and believe that one cannot exist without the other in creating a healthy educational framework.

At our school children spend a large amount of time outdoors: cultivating produce on their farm, visiting the Indian River Lagoon to collect samples and compile data and even just walking from one classroom to the next. This setting gives students the opportunity to use all of their senses to observe and engage with their place.

Students will become citizen scientists and true observers of their community as they learn to use a variety of traditional and non-traditional methods to peer into their surroundings.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

PRINCIPLES OF PLACE-BASED EDUCATION

- Learning takes place on-site in the school yard, in the local community and environment.
- Learning focuses on local themes, systems, and content.
- Learning is personally relevant to the learner.
- Learning experiences contribute to the community's vitality and environmental quality and support the community's role in fostering global environmental quality.
- Learning experiences are tailored to the local audience.
- Learning is grounded in and supports the development of a love for one's place.
- Local learning serves as the foundation for understanding and participating appropriately in regional and global issues.
- Learning is supported by strong and varied partnerships with local organizations, agencies, businesses, and government.
- Learning is interdisciplinary.

PRINCIPLES OF NATURE-BASED-EDUCATION

Adapted from the North American Association for Environmental Education's "Guidelines for Excellence in Environmental Education" and principles of interpretation.

- Nature is a central organizing concept of the program. That is, nature is the integrating thread that intentionally ties together the preschool's philosophy, methodologies, class-room design, outdoor spaces, and public identity.
- The program is based on high-quality developmentally appropriate practice in education and environmental education requiring its teaching staff to have skills and experience in both education and environmental education.
- The program uses the natural world to support dual goals that address both child development and conservation values. These include the development of the world of the child (in all domains – cognitive, physical, social, emotional, aesthetic, and spiritual) and the development of an ecological identity or environmental ethics.

PRINCIPLES OF PROJECT BASED LEARNING (PBL)

Project Based Learning is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge. Projects are rooted in the real world whenever possible and encourage students to create/develop tangible solutions by working collaboratively with their school community.

Essential Project-based Learning elements include:

- A challenging Problem or Question
- Sustained Inquiry
- Authenticity
- Student Voice & Choice
- Reflection
- Critique & Revision
- Public Product

(Adapted from the Buck Institute of Education)

PARENT COMMUNICATION

An open line of communication enriches the educational experience of our students and is an essential element for building partnerships. Your input is important to us. We are always happy to schedule a time to discuss any academic, social, emotional, or developmental questions either by phone, e-mail or in person.

Please keep the lines of communication open with us and let us know of any significant events in your child's life. Visitors, work trips, moving, new babies, divorce, illness or death can affect children in class. When we are informed about these changes we are better equipped to offer support and encouragement to your child.

BRIGHTWHEEL

Brightwheel is a parent-school communication app that allows EcoSchool staff to chart attendance, send updates/important communication, pictures/videos as well as to track academic growth for all students.

Brightwheel is our most frequently used mode of communication with parents and requires that all families download the app after receiving an invitation to join from EcoSchool. Please turn Brightwheel notifications to "on" on your phone to ensure effective communication throughout the week.

PARENT PORTAL

www.verdiecoschool.org/parents

On the parent portal, you can find up-to-date information for each program.

COMMUNITY GOOGLE CALENDAR

<https://calendar.google.com/calendar/r?cid=bzA1dDYycDEycXF0ZG9rdmVwN2c5dmd1NGdAZ3JvdXAuY2FsZW5kYXluZ29vZ2xILmNvbQ>

Upcoming school closures, volunteer opportunities, community events, parent and committee meetings, and more are kept up-to-date on this digital calendar.

WEEKLY RECAP NEWSLETTER EMAILS

Each week, you will receive a weekly recap email that outlines the details of the previous week in each program. The email also includes an upcoming calendar, volunteer opportunities, and more. If you are not receiving these emails or would like to change the email address to which they come, please let Denise know at denise.verdiecoschool@gmail.com

COMMUNITY FACEBOOK PAGE

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1864928753824835/>

Please join our School Family Facebook page at The Community of The Verdi EcoSchool.

PARENT MEETINGS

[Parent Meeting Dates 2019-2020](#)

Third Thursday of every month, alternating times between 4:00-5:30pm and 5:30pm-7:00pm

PARENT PARTICIPATION

THE COOPERATIVE EFFORT

As a nonprofit, cooperative school, Verdi EcoSchool continues to evolve and grow into the best version of itself: an organization in which the entire school community shares responsibility for running the school. In cooperative schools, which are also sometimes referred to as parent participation schools, the focus is on creating a school in which all stakeholders work together for the collective good and benefit of the student body.

Cooperative schools are based on the premise that strong and positive school-family relationships are the foundation of an effective education. Parent involvement/participation is not just about volunteering/attendance at events but a recognition that the health of the School Family extends into the parent-child relationship.

REQUIRED VOLUNTEER HOURS

All families enrolled in part- and full-time programs at the Verdi EcoSchool (Nature Immersion, Journeys, Upper School, High School) must commit to donating 30 hours of volunteer time over the course of the school year in an effort to build connection and increase familiarity with the necessary internal processes at the school. Without families who are willing to actively honor this commitment the health and progress of EcoSchool would suffer.

On May 1, 2020 incomplete hours will be billed to family at a rate of \$20/hr. Families who choose not to participate in the cooperative effort risk forfeiting their child's place in the program.

LOGGING VOLUNTEER HOURS

[Volunteer Hours Log](#)

It is essential that you log your volunteer hours via our Google Form above. Please also keep your own records of the hours you put in. If you need an update of how many hours have been logged or how many are left, please email denise.verdiecoschool@gmail.com.

PARENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

Families are the primary teachers of their children and providing safe and easy pathways into the child-led classroom for our school families is a very important part of the Verdi EcoSchool experience.

Working together can become a learning experience for both educator and parent. It is a wonderful way to strengthen the relationship between home and school while making a meaningful investment of time in the growth and development of your children.

When considering volunteering in the classroom it is important to note: a child's behavior in the group setting of the school family can be very different than how they behave at home. It is important to work with school staff to ensure that you understand school rules so that these expectations can be consistently outlined for all students. Students will look to you to model appropriate behavior and reinforce safe expectations within the school environment.

Thank you for all that you do to create a school that honors the needs of each individual child while building a community of lifelong learners. We appreciate you.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

Parents are always welcome! Parents may visit at any time. While visiting the Verdi EcoSchool we ask that parents observe and encourage their child to adhere to school rules and routines. We do ask that if you plan on bringing friends or other family members to visit you specify that in advance.

GETTING INVOLVED

We always appreciate parents who can help with cooking projects, join us for a walk, read a story, or share something special about themselves with the class. Please discuss your ideas with the Verdi EcoSchool team and review the extensive list below to signup for an existing opportunity!

Families of children enrolled in the full day Nature Immersion program can volunteer one full day per week in the classroom and receive a discount on the monthly program fee.

VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

- Provide the teacher with as much advance notice as possible if you cannot volunteer for your scheduled time.
- Actively engage with students and keep children in your sight at all times.
- Cell phone use is not permitted in the classroom.
- Model appropriate and positive behavior for students. Refrain from using offensive language or speaking negatively about children or adults during volunteer time.
- Maintain a friendly, helpful tone when interacting with students.
- Encourage students to make safe and considerate choices. If you are unsure how to redirect unsafe or hurtful behavior please ask an educator for help.

ORIENTATION

The parent volunteer orientation day is facilitated on the first day that you come to volunteer. A staff member will show you where important items are, how to find supplies, go over volunteer guidelines and make sure that you know who to go to if you have questions or need guidance.

STUDENT PRIVACY

Please remember that any information you gather about students in the classroom is confidential. If you are concerned about something you see or hear please bring your concerns to an educator or administrator. Do not share the personal information of students with others.

BACKGROUND CHECKS AND FINGERPRINTING

All parent volunteers choosing to spend their time in the classroom or supervising/working with children must complete and pay for a background check. If you have not been cleared (complete background check and fingerprints) with the Verdi EcoSchool you may not supervise any activities that require you to interact one on one with children. The cost for the background screening is \$65 for parents.

Email denise.verdiecoschool@gmail.com to schedule a background check.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Join a committee, choose a task, donate services or design your own project! Volunteer opportunities at EcoSchool are cultivated to enrich the School Family, deepen parent-school connection and ensure that EcoSchool continues to thrive and grow with the collective effort of our school community.

PARENT COMMITTEES

Please indicate which parent committee(s) you would like to join:

___Book Review Committee - Pre-read selected books as chosen by the EcoSchool education team and submit a review/recommendation of each. *2 hour per week commitment.*

___Fundraising Committee - Help create a fundraising plan for EcoSchool and work closely with the events and grant writing committee to focus high impact efforts. *1 hour per week commitment.*

___Grant Writing Committee - Research, investigate and help to write grants that apply to the EcoSchool mission. *2 hour per week commitment.*

___Events Committee - Plan community, school family and fundraising events for EcoSchool. Design and maintain a school calendar with a school wide listing of recurring and one time events. *2.5 hour per week commitment.*

___Community Meeting Committee - Send reminders to parents about the monthly parent meetings, help to keep the meeting agenda that goes out before each meeting and keep a potluck sign up rotation. Collect feedback from parents about meeting topics and best times/days to meet. Arrange for child care/ supervised activities during meetings and reserve monthly location. *2.5 hour per week commitment.*

___Community Outreach Committee - Identify potential community partners and contact to facilitate meaningful partnerships. *1 hour per week commitment.*

___Parent Tour Committee - Take prospective families on tours of the school and community campus! *2.5 hour per week commitment.*

___Welcome Committee - Contact newly enrolled parents and welcome them to the school community. Create a welcome wagon (food drop off rotation) for parents who are welcoming a new baby into their family. *1.5 hour per week commitment.*

___Academics Committee - Work closely with EcoSchool educators to review schedules, curricular trajectories, course proposals and academic plans. Review new educator resumes and plan new educator meet and greets as necessary. Offer feedback on academic policies and procedures. *1.5 hour per week commitment.*

___Budget and Bookkeeping Committee - Maintain EcoSchool accounts using Quickbooks and bright wheel. Help to produce budgets and annual report. Work with EcoSchool accountant to ensure timely submission of necessary tax/reporting documents. *3 hour per week commitment.*

___Parent Representative Committee - This committee must have at least one representative from each program: Nature Immersion, Journeys, Upper School, High School and Homeschool programs to share feedback from parents in each program, offer suggestions on how to improve processes at EcoSchool and to recommend new initiatives and projects for the benefit of the entire school community. This committee is led by the Parent Representative At Large who sits on the board to speak for the EcoSchool parent community. *1.5 hour per week commitment.*

___Parent Education Committee - Works with the Conscious Discipline facilitators of each program to design engaging and informative parent education nights each month. Invites guest speakers to lead open discussions and workshops on topics of interest to the parent community. Collects feedback from parents regarding desired educational topics/opportunities. *2 hour per week commitment.*

___Wellness Committee - Helps to educate the school community regarding topics of mental and physical health. Designs the monthly wellness newsletter. *2 hour per week commitment.*

___Sustainability Committee - Create awareness of sustainable practices within the school community. Design, propose and implement sustainability initiatives. *2 hour per week commitment.*

___Safety and Security Committee - Maintain school safety plan and facilitate relationships with local law enforcement to keep them aware of how EcoSchool students use the community. Research and/or install security measures (gate buzzers, cameras) to ensure student safety. Invite local fire and police department to lead school safety assembly. *2 hour per week commitment.*

PARENT JOBS

Please indicate which job(s) you would like to volunteer for:

___Nature Immersion Parent Volunteer Coordinator - Schedule and lead parent volunteer orientation days and act as liaison between Nature Immersion parent volunteers and staff. Create and maintain document to keep track of volunteer hours for Journeys families. Schedule/plan seasonal parent volunteer appreciation days. *2 hour per week commitment.*

___Journeys Parent Volunteer Coordinator - Schedule and lead parent volunteer orientation days and act as liaison between Journeys parent volunteers and staff. Create and maintain document to keep track of volunteer hours for Journeys families. Schedule/plan seasonal parent volunteer appreciation days. *2 hour per week commitment.*

___Upper School Parent Volunteer Coordinator - Schedule and lead parent volunteer orientation days and act as liaison between Upper School parent volunteers and staff. Create and maintain document to keep track of volunteer hours for Upper School families. Schedule/plan seasonal parent volunteer appreciation days. *2 hour per week commitment.*

___Plant Caretaker - Water indoor/outdoor potted plants at 1851 and 1861 Highland. *1 hour per week commitment.*

___Farm/Garden Volunteer - Water beds, mounds and new plantings at farm. Make fertilizer tea once per week (guano/water) and feed plants on a rotating basis. Water seedlings. Organize seedling/nursery. Spread fresh mulch/chips around plant growth and exposed soil. Build raised garden beds. Turn compost pile. Make farm signs. Help with harvest. *2 hour per week commitment.*

___Transition Assistant - Assist educators when students are transitioning to different courses throughout the day *1 hour per week commitment.*

___Lunch and Learn Coordinator - Invite experts, specialists and community members to share personal experiences or demonstrate a skill. *2 hour per week commitment.*

___Office Assistant - Help to organize papers/files, answer emails and phone messages in the EcoSchool office. *2 hour per week commitment.*

___High School Internship Coordinator - Research and compile internship opportunities for Eco-High School students within the EGAD community. Help to implement/design internship provider orientation and invite chosen/approved internship providers to student orientation. *2.5 hour per week commitment.*

___Animal Caretaker - Bring fresh fruits and vegetables for rabbits and chickens. Replace old bedding (hay/chips) with new clean bedding each week. Ensure that all animals have fresh water every day. Spend cuddle time with animals. *3 hour per week commitment.*

___Classroom Cleaner - Wipe down all toys with vinegar/water solution. Clean table with vinegar/water solution. Wipe down all chairs with vinegar/water solution. Wipe down insides of all cubbies and clean surfaces. Sweep and mop floors. *2.5 hour per week commitment.*

___Material Maker - Make interactive classroom resources with guidance from educator *1 hour per week commitment.*

___Library Tender/Reading Buddy - Wipe down books and book shelves and sort books. Repair ripped books and/or dispose of damaged books. Choose books to read to individual children and group. *1.5 hour per week commitment.*

___Nature Space Cleaner - Walk nature space and pick up/dispose of any garbage on the ground. Wash outdoor pots/pans and utensils with soap and water. Wipe down outdoor toys with vinegar/water solution. Make sure all items return to their spaces. Wipe down chalkboard and mirrors. *1.5 hour per week commitment.*

Laundry Helpers - Bring home a hamper or basket of laundry to wash and return the next day. *1 hour per week commitment.*

___I'd like to take home washcloths to wash once per week.

___I'd like to take home stuffies (stuffed animals) to wash once per week.

___I'd like to take home pillows/pillow covers to wash once per week.

___I'd like to take home costumes to wash once per week.

___I'd like to take home lost clothes to wash once per week.

___I'd like to take home placemats/kneeling rugs to wash once per week.

___Conscious Discipline Facilitator- Help create Conscious discipline materials. Work with staff to schedule monthly Conscious Discipline parent education meetings. *1 hour per week commitment.*

___Cooking - Lead a cooking experience. *2.5 hour per week commitment.*

___Materials Volunteer - Organize materials closets and sort donated materials. Notify educators if any materials are running low. *1 hour per week commitment.*

___Exhibition Coordinator - Organize, store, display, matte, label and inventory student work throughout the year in preparation for end of year exhibition. *1 hour per week commitment.*

___Curb Appeal Crew - Sort books in Little Free Library and keep area neat and organized. Sweep sidewalk, pathway, stairs, ramp and porch. Pick up any garbage on grass in front of schoolhouse. Spray and wipe clean glass door and front windows. Keep outdoor area neat and free of clutter. *1.5 hour per week commitment.*

___Yoga/Mindfulness Leader - Lead yoga/mindfulness practice during the morning meeting. *1.5 hour per week commitment.*

___Math Buddies - Work on math solutions with a student partner. *1 hour per week commitment.*

OTHER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

___Do you offer a professional service (rental property, contractor services, etc.) that would be of benefit to EcoSchool and would like to donate this service for your volunteer hours?
Please describe what you would like to offer:

Please choose the following option if you are unable to volunteer or offer a service and would prefer to make a monetary donation to fulfill your volunteer requirement.

___Please send me an invoice for \$600 (30 hours X \$20 per hour) to fulfill my volunteer requirement.

GOVERNANCE

At the Verdi EcoSchool we have embraced a somewhat revolutionary idea: all members of the school community should have a voice in the evolution of their school.

As a young not for profit we are focused on creating a strong, stable foundation that includes:

1. A diverse board of directors that includes parent representatives, student representatives, a Verdi EcoSchool educator and members of the community at large.
2. Volunteer parent committees that implement initiatives, exchange ideas and recommend policy changes to Verdi EcoSchool staff.
3. An education team that works collaboratively to create a challenging educational environment that respects the developmental and individual needs of each student.
4. A staff that uses a consensus based approach to make decisions regarding new student invitations, staff recruitment, curriculum, budget/spending and all other items that affect the growth and vision of the Verdi EcoSchool.
5. The Parent Representative Committee made up of parents from each EcoSchool program that is responsible for nominating a parent representative to the Verdi EcoSchool board of directors.

TUITION 2019–2020

PAYMENT SCHEDULE (FULL YEAR COMMITMENT)

JOURNEYS AND UPPER SCHOOL

Monday-Friday 8:15am-3:30pm

Pay full balance of \$8955 at registration OR

Pay 10% deposit and pay the tuition balance in 10 equal payments due the 1st of each month.

HOMESCHOOL FLEX PROGRAM

Mon/Tues/Wed 8:15am-3:30pm

Pay full balance of \$7150 at registration OR

Pay 10% deposit and pay the tuition balance in 10 equal payments due the 1st of each month.

NATURE IMMERSION

Full Day (9am-3:30pm)

___Monday-Friday = \$9,600

___Mon/Wed/Fri = \$5760

___Tues/Thursday = \$3840

Half Day (9am-12pm)

___Monday-Friday = \$4800

___Mon/Wed/Fri = \$2880

___Tues/Thurs = \$2000

LATE PICK UP FEE

Parents picking up children after 3:30pm are considered late. Families who establish a habitual pattern of late pick-ups may be subject to late fees and will be notified in advance. The time that the education team spends together directly following dismissal is crucial to the success of our program. Staff uses this time to recap the days successes and challenges, record observations and assessments of students and get ready for the next day.

ADDITIONAL EXPENSES

Parents should anticipate occasional small expenses throughout the year, including but not limited to field trips, supplies and special projects.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

If you choose to withdraw your child from the Verdi EcoSchool, you must fill out a 30-Day Notice of Withdrawal form (available upon request). This form must be submitted at least 30 days in advance of your child's intended date of withdrawal. You will forfeit tuition paid up to that point.

FORMS

Parents are asked to submit and annually keep up-to-date:

Tuition contract

Student-parent information form

Medical history, consent and pick up form

Photo Release Form

Emergency Authorization

Certificate of Immunization or Exemption Form

Child's Health Information Form

Program Waiver Form

CLOTHING AND SUPPLIES

As our students spend a large amount of their time outdoors, having the appropriate clothing and supplies is especially important for our students' well being.

Wearing the right clothes for the weather is crucial to ensuring everyone has a good experience.

Please be sure to label all of your child's belongings. A lost and found is present in each classroom/program.

Here is what we recommend:

NATURE IMMERSION

Comfortable, closed toe, waterproof footwear

Clothing that can get muddy and dirty

Loose fitting clothing for easy movement

Rain pants, jacket or rain suit that is either worn on rainy days or stored at Highland House

Minimum 1 pair of extra clothes (with undies and socks) to store at Highland House

Hat

A comfortable mat or sleeping bag for nap/rest time

A small pillow and blanket

Wet wipes (2 packages)

Paper Towels (2 rolls)

A refillable water bottle

Sun protection

A small mat/rug for individual exploration (2'x3' and made of a natural material)

Snacks & Lunch (2 snacks and lunch for full day, 1 snack for half day)

JOURNEYS AND UPPER SCHOOL

Comfortable, closed toe, waterproof footwear

Clothing that can get muddy and dirty

Loose fitting clothing for easy movement

Rain pants, jacket or rain suit that is either worn or stored at school

Minimum 1 pair of extra clothes stored in students' backpack

A refillable water bottle

Hat

Sun protection

Indoor slippers

Snacks & Lunch (2 snacks and lunch for full day)

LUNCH AND SNACKS

MEALTIME PHILOSOPHY

We approach diverse family values around food in the same way we support the individuality of each child. Meals are a time for coming together as a community and sharing the observations of the day.

Students must bring two snacks and a packed lunch from home each day. As a "nut aware" school we ask that you refrain from sending foods that contain peanuts.

ALLERGIES

In cases of severe allergies or diet restrictions, parents may be asked to exclude certain foods from their child's snack. If your child has an allergy or food restriction, documentation must be on file with the school.

WATER BOTTLES

Please provide a refillable water bottle for your child each day. If a child arrives to school without a refillable water bottle the school will provide one at a charge of \$6

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

SICK CHILD POLICY

Parents are required to keep children home if they exhibit any symptoms of illness as listed below. We understand the difficulty of this for working parents, but this must be done to maintain a healthy environment for everyone. Parents are obligated to report any communicable disease or condition (i.e., conjunctivitis, head lice, chicken pox, etc.) to the staff so that we can alert other parents as soon as possible.

The nature of our program makes these standards especially important in order to prevent worsening or spread of symptoms. Please consider whether your child is able to be outdoors in addition to the conditions listed below.

Please keep your child home if they have any of the following conditions:

Fever of 100+: (Must be fever-free for 24 hours before returning)

Diarrhea: More than one loose stool within a 24 hour period

Vomiting: More than once in 24-hour period

Severe coughing with runny nose and green mucus

Rashes: (un-identifiable or non-typical rash)

Pink-eye (conjunctivitis): Redness of eyelid, swelling and/or discharge

Change of color of skin or eyes (may be signs of hepatitis)

Unable to participate in normal activities including outdoor play

Lice or scabies: For head lice, children and staff may return after treatment and no nits; for scabies, return after treatment.

If a child arrives at school and exhibits possible symptoms of an illness, we will move the child away from others and have them lie down quietly and rest. If a child continues to feel ill, we will call the parents. If parents cannot be reached, a relative or emergency contact will be called to pick the child up. In the case of minor injury, the child's parents will be notified and an "Incident Report" will be completed in brightwheel.

If a child has a head or eye injury, the parent will be notified by phone.

In the case of an emergency involving serious illness or injury, parents and 911 will be called.

Staff members will follow the same exclusion criteria as children.

MEDICATION POLICY

[Medication Authorization Form](#)

Any medication or special medical procedures will be administered only with a signed Medication Authorization form (available on the Parent Portal) from the parents or guardians. They are required for all types of medication, including non-prescription medication such as Tylenol, sunscreen, chapstick, lotions and ointments, homeopathic medicines, etc.

Please follow the procedures below: Prescription drugs must be in the original prescription bottle with the child's name and dose indicated on the bottle. Non-prescription medications must be in the original container with the child's first and last name and the date it was brought to school written on the container. Medication will only be administered to the limit of the instructions on the label. All medications must be dispensed by a staff member and may not be kept in the child's possession.

SCHOOL CALENDAR 2019–2020

Updated digital .pdf and Google Calendar downloads available at:

www.verdiecoschool.org/parents

SUMMER EXTENSION (3 weeks // 15 days)

Monday, June 10 - Friday July 5 - SCHOOL CLOSED FOR ALL (4 weeks)

Week 1: Monday, July 8- Friday, July 12

Week 2: Monday, July 15- Friday, July 19

Week 3: Monday, July 22 - Friday, July 26

Monday, July 29 - Friday, August 2 - NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATOR PRE-PLANNING (1 week)

BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHTS

Nature Immersion (Ages 3-5) -Wednesday, July 31, 4:30pm-5:30pm

Journeys (Ages: 5-7) - Wednesday, July 31, 5:30-6:30pm

Upper School (Ages: 8-14) - Wednesday, July 31 - 6:30-7:30pm

Monday, August 5 - RETURN TO INSTRUCTION

Monday, August 5 - Friday, August 16 - Building the School Family/SEL Framework (2 weeks//10 days)

Monday, August 19 - Friday, September 27 - FALL I SEMESTER (6 weeks//29 days)

Monday, September 2 - NO SCHOOL - Labor Day

Monday, September 30 - Friday, October 4 - SCHOOL CLOSED FOR ALL - Break (1 week)

Monday, October 7 - Friday, November 15 - FALL II SEMESTER (6 weeks//29 days)

Monday, November 11 - NO SCHOOL - Veterans Day

Thursday, November 21 - 4:00-5:30pm - Harvest Dinner

Monday, November 18 -Friday, November 22 - ELECTIVE TBD (1 week//5 days)

Monday, November 25 - Friday, November 29 - SCHOOL CLOSED FOR ALL - Harvest Holiday Break (1 week)

Monday, December 2 - Friday, December 20 - WINTER I SEMESTER (3 of 6 weeks//15 days)

Monday, December 23 - Friday, January 3 - SCHOOL CLOSED FOR ALL- Winter Break (2 weeks)

Monday, January 6 - RETURN TO INSTRUCTION

Monday, January 6 - Friday, January 24 - WINTER I SEMESTER (cont. 3 of 6 weeks//14 days)

Monday, January 20 - NO SCHOOL - MLK Day

Monday, January 27 - Friday, January 31 - ELECTIVE TBD (1 week//5 days)

Monday, February 3 - Friday, February 7 - SCHOOL CLOSED FOR ALL - Break (1 week)

Monday, February 10 - Friday, March 13 - WINTER II SEMESTER (5 weeks//24 days)

Monday, February 17 - NO SCHOOL - Presidents Day

Monday, March 16 - Friday, March 20 - SCHOOL CLOSED FOR ALL - Spring Break

Monday, March 23 - Friday, May 1 - SPRING SEMESTER (6 weeks//30 days)

Monday, May 4 - Friday, May 8 - ELECTIVE TBD (1 week//5 days)

Monday, May 11 - Friday, May 15 - SCHOOL CLOSED FOR ALL- Break (1 week)

Monday, May 18 - Friday, May 26 - Mini-PBL & Exhibition Prep (1 week// 7 days)

Monday, May 25 - NO SCHOOL - Memorial Day

Tuesday, May 26 - Exhibition

Wednesday, May 27 - LAST DAY OF SCHOOL

Thursday, May 28 Friday, May 29 - EDUCATOR POST-PLANNING - NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS

Monday, June 1 - Friday, June 12 - SCHOOL CLOSED FOR ALL- Break (2 weeks)

TOTAL INSTRUCTIONAL DAYS = 188

As per Florida Department of Education regulations, full-time students must attend at least 170 days in each school year (full time K-9).

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Please provide doctors notes for extended illness and appointments that result in absence from school. Students will also require a note from a doctor to return to school after recovering from any serious/communicable disease.

Travel due to family military deployment, death or grave sickness of a family member are also excused absences. Please provide proof in the form of a letter describing the circumstances leading to the students absence.

Educational travel and student internships are subject to approval by EcoSchool. Please proactively discuss any educational travel or student internships that may result in student absence with EcoSchool staff.

Please document your child's absence in Brightwheel by marking them "ABSENT" in the app for each day they will miss school.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Our unique, community as campus model necessitates a comprehensive safety review and plan for our school community.

Students will travel to their Eau Gallie Arts District classrooms by foot and will be made aware of safe traveling behavior, the advantages of using a buddy system and appropriate responses for a variety of emergency situations.

Our ultimate goal is to impress upon members of our school community the importance of staying together as a group and paying attention to our surroundings, all with one goal in mind: SAFETY!

The first week of school is dedicated to the implementation of the safety plan, campus tours and "safe haven" drills that walk students through a variety of scenarios and introduction to "safe havens" within our community campus.

ANTI HARASSMENT

We are committed to providing an environment where staff, families and students are treated with respect. We will not tolerate harassment from any member of the school community, vendors or visitors. Harassment takes many forms, and can include unwelcome comments, slurs, jokes, innuendos, cartoons, pranks or other verbal or physical conduct that creates an uncomfortable environment.

FAMILY CODE OF CONDUCT

At Verdi EcoSchool we are thankful to be a part of a dedicated and supportive cooperative school community. We recognize that a meaningful and joyful education for our children means that we must all embark upon the work necessary to create a healthy partnership between school and family.

The purpose of this code of conduct is to acknowledge a commitment to positive and respectful interactions between all stakeholders in the school community.

We commit to building a welcoming environment for all families regardless of race, color, religion, creed, gender (which includes a person's actual or perceived sex, as well as gender identity and expression), age, marital status, disability, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, familial status, predisposing genetic characteristics, actual or perceived domestic violence victim status, unemployment status, caregiver status or any other category protected by applicable federal, state or local law.

We commit to keeping it safe with helpful actions and helpful words.

We commit to applying the seven skills of Conscious Discipline: Composure, Encouragement, Assertiveness, Choices, Empathy, Positive Intent and Consequences to help guide us toward cooperative and respectful interactions.

We commit to a collaborative effort of building the School Family and creating a resilient, compassionate and inclusive school home.

Joining the EcoSchool Family means making a conscious decision to:

- Positively participate in EcoSchool events, forums and connection opportunities.
- Refrain from disruptive behaviour which interferes with or threatens to interfere with any of the school's normal operations or activities anywhere on the school premises, this includes using hurtful words and/or offensive language on the school premises.
- Use healthy communication strategies to express concerns, share feedback and request information from members of the school community.
- Refrain from threatening in any way, a member of EcoSchool staff, visitors, fellow parents/caretakers or children.
- Commit to the collaborative process of building and growing a cooperative school.
- Refrain from damaging or destroying school property.

- Commit to attending, in person, at least one EcoSchool event over the course of the school year. This could be a Community Meeting, parent connection activity and/or parent education workshop.
- Refrain from sending abusive, aggressive, defamatory, derogatory or threatening emails/comments or text/voicemail/phone messages or other written communications (including social media) to anyone within the school community.
- Keep an open line of communication with your child's educators and be willing to discuss ideas and plans for making the school experience as enriching as possible for your child.
- Refrain from the use of physical, verbal or written aggression towards another adult or child. This includes approaching someone else's child regarding a school conflict as well as interactions with a spouse or partner and/or physical punishment of your own child on school premises.
- Accept that EcoSchool is an inclusive educational community which celebrates all families regardless of race, color, religion, creed, gender (which includes a person's actual or perceived sex, as well as gender identity and expression), age, marital status, disability, learning challenges, national or ethnic origin, political affiliation, sexual orientation, familial status, predisposing genetic characteristics, actual or perceived domestic violence victim status, unemployment status, caregiver status or any other category protected by applicable federal, state or local law.
- Refrain from smoking, taking illegal drugs or the consumption of alcohol on school premises. (Alcohol may only be consumed on campus during authorized events.)
- Commit to learning and growing with our children.
- Refrain from bringing dogs and other pets on to the school premises with the exception of registered support animals.

CODE OF CONDUCT RESPONSE ESCALATION

When a member of the School Family chooses not to honor the Code of Conduct they risk the implementation of an escalating tier of responses and/or immediate dismissal of the family and student from the EcoSchool program.

1. EcoSchool will respond with an invitation for an in person meeting to discuss the occurrence. The objective of this meeting is for both school and family member(s) to come to a resolution that addresses the breach of conduct. If the School Family member refuses/declines to attend the meeting, EcoSchool will outline a series of expectations that must be met to address/remedy the Code of Conduct breach.

2. If the School Family member continues to disregard the Code of Conduct, EcoSchool will notify the School Family member, in writing, that continued refusal to honor the Code of Conduct will result in dismissal action.
3. Dismissal action will be taken for serious Code of Conduct breaches and/or for repeated disregard of the EcoSchool Code of Conduct.
4. If a member of the School Family's behavior is considered to be a serious threat to the safety and wellbeing of anyone within the school community the occurrence will be referred to the appropriate law enforcement authority.

If a School Family member has any concerns about their child's experience at EcoSchool please use the following escalation procedure:

1. Contact your child's educator directly to request a meeting (phone and/or in person) to discuss your concerns.
2. If the concern remains or the educator response is unsatisfactory please request a meeting with the administrator/director to discuss a resolution. You may choose to have your child's educator as well as an EcoSchool Parent Representative present at this meeting.
3. If the issue/concern is still unresolved after attempting a meeting with your child's educator as well as the administrator/director you may request a meeting with the EcoSchool Board of Directors to discuss your concern.
4. If you are dissatisfied with the response of the Board of Directors you may choose to initiate a session with a registered/licensed Impartial Mediator. Impartial Mediators generally charge an hourly rate for their services, EcoSchool is willing to share 50% of the cost of this expense for any family in need of mediation.

When a member of the School Family chooses not to honor the Code of Conduct they risk the implementation of an escalating tier of responses and/or immediate dismissal of the family and student from the EcoSchool program.

CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE

Conscious Discipline is a skill-based program to help educators and parents resolve, enhance brain development, by creating optimal learning environments, support self-regulation in ways that strengthen relationships instead of destroying them, and help children to build respectful relationships with themselves, peers, parents, and each other.

When children join the EcoSchool Family, educators immediately begin the work of building connection. The first two weeks of the school year are devoted entirely to implementing Conscious Discipline structures that help children to feel safe, connected and valued as individuals. The purpose is to invite children into an environment where they are intrinsically motivated to care for, respect and support their School Family. One of the students' first assignments is to help design and commit to their Class Agreements.

CD PARENT EDUCATION NIGHTS

[Conscious Discipline Parent Education Night Calendar](#)

Conscious Discipline parent education nights are held monthly to give families an opportunity to understand and apply these helpful practices at home.

PUNISHMENTS VS. CONSEQUENCES

A common misconception about Conscious Discipline is that there are no consequences. The reality is that Conscious Discipline has effective consequences instead of traditional consequences.

PUNISHMENTS:

- Make children suffer for having a problem
- Cause children to fear making mistakes
- Rely on judgement
- Provide extrinsic motivation to please others and avoid physical/emotional pain
- Focus on what not to do

CONSEQUENCES:

- Teach children how to solve problems
- Show children that mistakes are opportunities to learn
- Rely on reflection and personal responsibility
- Provide intrinsic motivation to use or learn new skills
- Focus on what to do instead

NATURAL CONSEQUENCES

Natural consequences are those which occur naturally. Example: You touch a hot stove and burn your hand.

LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

Logical consequences have a direct cause and effect relationship to a child's behavior and are pre arranged to honor a given expectation. Example: A logical consequence for a child who chooses to run with scissors would be losing the privilege to use scissors. Logical consequences are implemented after giving children a choice which relates to safety and helpfulness:

"You can choose to walk with the scissors to the table and cut your artwork, OR you can choose to run with the scissors and lose the privilege of using them for the rest of the day, so everyone is safe, including you."

PROBLEM SOLVING

Problem-solving motivates children to become part of the solution through the use of shared power. The work of problem-solving happens one on one with educators and students as well as during class/school meetings for issues that involve the entire class or School Family.

STUDENT BEHAVIORAL ESCALATION PLAN (designed, in part, by Verdi EcoSchool students)

1. USE YOUR WORDS

Be assertive when uncomfortable with a situation. Say: "Stop it. I don't like it when you____. Next time____"

2. ASK FOR HELP

If being assertive has not resolved the situation seek the support and assistance of an adult.

- The adult will address the issue with all parties involved to help find a solution.

3. PARENT CONFERENCE/ BEHAVIORAL RESPONSE PLAN

If an individual continues to use hurtful words and actions after being approached by both student and adult to stop, an educator will contact the student's parents to initiate a parent conference.

- The purpose of the parent conference is to find a solution to the recurring behavior.
- Educator and parent will work together to develop a Behavioral Response Plan.
- Educator may recommend outside therapeutic support services for students struggling with hurtful behaviors.
- A parent/family member may be required to attend Conscious Discipline Parent Education nights as a condition of their child's enrollment as part of their Behavioral Response Plan.

4. EDUCATION AND INTERVENTION

If an individual continues to exhibit hurtful words and actions after the parent conference, the student will be enrolled in an EcoSchool "Teaching Tolerance" course and/or an EcoSchool facilitated social skills program or one offered by an outside provider.

- These programs must run for at least two semesters and culminate with a progress report to discuss individual student growth and continued goals.
- Educator will implement daily check-ins to increase/build connection.

5. ACCOUNTABILITY AND SELF-CORRECTION

If after faithful implementation of the EcoSchool Student Escalation Plan, a student is still unable to discontinue the use of hurtful/unsafe words and actions within the School Family, EcoSchool will work with the student and family to pull in intensive therapeutic supports. Student may lose the privilege of attending classes with their peers while working on a solution to correct recurring hurtful/unsafe behavior.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Restorative practices focus on mediation and agreement to help students take accountability for their actions, be willing to repair the harm caused to others and make appropriate restitution to those affected. Restorative circles provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to participate in equitable discussions that address harms, needs, obligations and causes of conflict. Restorative practices seek to build healthy relationships between educators and students by:

- Addressing and discussing the needs of the school community
- Resolving conflict and holding individuals and groups accountable
- Repairing harm and restoring positive relationships

ASSESSMENTS AND TRACKING GROWTH

Our challenge, as educators of an alternative educational program, is to find evidence of both students' learning of content knowledge and the creative, social and emotional dimensions of their understanding. The most important pieces of learning that we would like to assess are not accessible with "traditional" tests. It is our aim to create contextual - not standardized - assessments.

To do this we must ask difficult questions:

In what ways can we determine our students' progress in learning content knowledge and gain insight into student engagement?

How well are we doing as educators in transforming and/or enriching our students' relationships with the natural world?

How can our assessments value shared inquiry and collaboration?

Do our assessment practices acknowledge the emotional and imaginative lives of our students?

How are we determining if our students have fulfilled curricular outcomes through their place-based learning?

How do we know if our teaching is supporting the development of their ecological understanding?

We utilize a "big picture" approach to help us find answers:

A "standards aware" curriculum that helps us to keep track of standard content areas on a state and national level

A variety of formative and summative student assessments including self assessments

Hands-on, project based presentations where students must create a tangible product showcasing their learning

SCOPE AND SEQUENCES

Scope and Sequences are documents that outline the depth and breadth of each subject area taught within each program.

Nature Immersion Scope and Sequence

Journeys Scope and Sequence

Upper School Scope and Sequence

RUBRICS

Rubrics are customized scoring guides used to evaluate performance, a product, or a project that includes performance criteria, rating scale, and indicators.

STUDENT PORTFOLIO

JOURNEYS AND UPPER SCHOOL

We utilize Seesaw, a digital portfolio app as an authentic assessment of student growth, progress and ability.

Portfolios are a compilation of student work across all subjects to show: growth and change over time, strengths and weaknesses, samples of best work, and achievement of content mastery.

Educators and students both choose accurate representations of student work to display in digital portfolios. Portfolios can also include additional forms of assessment such as: illustrations, writing samples, video blogs/concept explanations, presentations, and photo documentation.

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLANS(ILPS)

An Individual Learning Plan is a document developed by educators in conjunction with students and their parents. ILPs are a record of a student's growth while attending Verdi EcoSchool and can contain information about skills/hobbies, academic strengths and challenges as well as goals and aspirations.

ILP meetings occur every 6 weeks throughout the school year to keep both student and parents aware of each student's personal trajectory.

EXHIBITION

The end result of an in depth, extended period of learning, exhibitions provide evidence that students have mastered specific content and can apply what they have learned throughout the school year.

At the Verdi EcoSchool exhibitions are open to the community at large and local business people and experts are often invited. Cultivating a strong connection to the community outside of school is encouraged. Student exhibitions are the culmination of months of feedback, ongoing assessment and revisions.

The entire school participates in the process and each student commits to accepting the exhibition as an indicator of their readiness to move on to more challenging content. Demonstrating mastery of content in all subjects is the ultimate goal of a successful exhibition.

The exhibition date for the 2019-2020 school year is Tuesday, May 26, 2020.

HOMEWORK

Decades ago, the American Educational Research Association released this statement:

“Whenever homework crowds out social experience, outdoor recreation, and creative activities, and whenever it usurps time that should be devoted to sleep, it is not meeting the basic needs of children and adolescents.”

There is no traditional homework at Verdi EcoSchool. Students and families may ask to continue project work at home, request extension activities based upon student interest and/or explore an independent study. Occasionally, students who need extra quiet time to work and/or students who have refused to complete assignments during the school day may have work sent home at the educator's discretion. We encourage children to read at home, alone and with their family, but feel strongly that the demands on children during the school day: learning the intricacies of peer to peer interaction, practicing academic skills and collaborating with educators is best met with the balance of free time at home.

GRADES

In contrast to conventional classroom practices utilizing grading systems, at EcoSchool we follow a mastery based system which honors each individual student's growth and cultivates a holistic system which requires that students demonstrate learning before moving ahead to more challenging content. The Verdi EcoSchool tracks student growth upon the following trajectory: Beginning, Developing, Mastery and Expert.

STUDENT DEVICE POLICY

NATURE IMMERSION AND JOURNEYS

Please leave your devices at home.

UPPER SCHOOL

Student devices such as phones, tablets, and laptops can be brought to school, but are to be used for educational purposes only. Students may use their devices for research or as a project-specific tool and students can listen to music on their devices during appropriate times if it helps them to concentrate. Students must ask an educator and get permission before taking out their devices. If a student takes their devices out without permission, or are using them for non-educational purposes, they will receive a verbal reminder from an educator. If they continue misuse,, an educator will hold the device for safekeeping and give it back to the student at the end of the day. If a pattern of misuse continues, an educator will let a parent know and ask that the student does not bring their device(s) to school.

PERSONAL TOYS AT SCHOOL

Personal toys can often be a distraction at school. Please keep them at home to ensure that they do not impede learning during the school day or get lost.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

The Verdi EcoSchool admits students of any race, color, religion, creed, gender, disability, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation or any other category protected by applicable federal, state or local law, to all the rights privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the School. The School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, gender (which includes a person's actual or perceived sex, as well as gender identity and expression), age, marital status, disability, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, familial status, predisposing genetic characteristics, actual or perceived domestic violence victim status, unemployment status, caregiver status or any other category protected by applicable federal, state or local law, in carrying on its educational activities or in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, employment policies, financial aid programs, and athletic and other school administered programs.