



ZIMTOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**Parent Handbook
March 24, 2023**



CONTENTS

Philosophy	4	Harassment	8
Curriculum.....	4	Aggressive Fantasy Play	8
Organization.....	4	Masturbation and Sexual Play	8
Organizational Structure	4	Appropriate Touch between Teacher and Child	8
Legal Standing and Accreditation	4	Transsexuality.....	9
Daily Schedule.....	5	Fairness	9
Enrollment and Termination	5	Health and Safety.....	9
Enrollment	5	Health Records	9
Intake.....	6	Exclusion from Class Due to Illness	9
Enrollment Limits	6	Notification of Infectious Diseases	9
Waiting List.....	6	Administration of Medication	9
Termination by Parents	6	Emergency Care Procedure	10
Termination by School.....	6	Updating of Emergency Information.....	10
Program Policies	6	Smoking.....	10
Attendance.....	6	Fire and Storm Procedures.....	10
Hours of Operation and Emergency Closing... 6		Insurance	10
Arrival and Departure.....	6	Parent Rights and Responsibilities.....	10
Nutrition	7	Communication	10
Field Trips and Resource People	7	Visiting.....	10
Clothing.....	7	Parent Permission	10
Toys from Home.....	7	Parent Behavior at School.....	10
Electronics	7	Grievance Procedures	10
Pets	7	Finances	10
Food from Home.....	7	Tuition and Fees	10
Birthday Parties	7	Funding.....	11
Guidance Policies.....	7	Obtaining Further Information	11
General Guidance Policies.....	7		

We have tried to make the policies in this handbook as straightforward and fair as possible. If you have any questions or comments regarding the handbook, please contact us.

PHILOSOPHY

At Zimtor, we believe that children learn best when they take an active role in shaping their own education. Those activities that are intrinsically interesting and satisfying to a child are most likely those that best meet the child's needs. For this reason, we attempt to give children as many choices as possible. Children are free to choose their own activities for much of the day, and many activities and materials at Zimtor are flexible, so that children are free to be creative. The only cases in which children's choices are generally limited are those where health and safety are involved or where the rights of others are likely to be violated.

Because children are responsible for directing their own education in this way, we see grades and examinations as unnecessary. Instead, achievement is measured by narrative evaluations that the children themselves help write. In these evaluations, only accomplishments are noted, without regard to normative expectations or goals.

We also believe that children grow in maturity, judgement, and self-esteem most readily by making their own decisions. Therefore, besides giving children the freedom to choose their own activities and to work creatively, we also strive to involve children in many of the day-to-day decisions that affect the classroom. Children take part in developing curriculum, making classroom rules, and planning special events. Teachers take part in these decisions too, of course, but the emphasis is on reaching decisions through a collaborative group process in which everyone is strongly involved.

Finally, we believe that cooperation, rather than competition, brings out the best in each person. Children are encouraged to work together in most activities, and many activities are designed to foster cooperation specifically. In particular, all sports and games at Zimtor attempt to involve every child in some collective goal. By taking this approach, we hope that children will come to be as concerned about others as about themselves.

CURRICULUM

Our curricular approach is based on the progressive project method, in which a unit theme guides all the activities of the classroom. Language, math, science, social studies, physical education, and art are all presented in an integrated way within the unit. For example, in a unit on nineteenth-century pioneer life, we might read original source materials such as diaries from the archives of the Minnesota Historical Society, work with calendars and dates to get a sense of how long ago specific events occurred, learn about the differences between nineteenth-century crops and modern hybridized crops, cook using authentic nineteenth-century recipes, recreate a nineteenth-century dance, explore the paintings of Grandma Moses, and visit a living history farm such as the Oliver Kelly Farm in Elk River.

Most activities at Zimtor emphasize discovery and creativity. In a cooking project, for example, children might be encouraged to notice the changes that occur as ingredients are combined or heated and to think of ways to make the recipe better. Art activities involve genuine artistic creation, usually with adult art materials.

Field trips are an integral part of our program, and most units conclude with a field trip to a place such as a museum, a factory, or a local business.

ORGANIZATION

Organizational Structure

Zimtor is operated by Zimtor Corporation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation governed by a self-perpetuating, three-member board. The Zimtor board has ultimate responsibility for the operation and policies of the school. However, parents, teachers, and students are consulted on all major decisions affecting the school.

Our staff consists of a single teacher/director, Lewis Campbell. He is responsible for all aspects of the daily operation of the school.

Legal Standing and Accreditation

Zimtor meets or exceeds all applicable state and local statutes and rules. We plan to apply for accreditation as soon as we are eligible, at the end of our second year of operation.

Daily Schedule

A representative daily schedule is presented in the box below.

ENROLLMENT AND TERMINATION

Enrollment

Children may start at Zimtor at any time of year. To be

eligible for enrollment, children must be at least four-and-a-half years old and no more than eight years old on September 1 of the school year of enrollment, or if older than eight must have attended a school similar to Zimtor. Children enrolled for the full-day session must be able to complete the entire day without becoming unduly tired. Prior to enrollment, at least one parent must meet with the teacher/director for an interview and each child must complete a one-day trial visit at Zimtor. For children who apply prior to Zimtor's initial opening, a short visit with the teacher/director will be substituted for the classroom visit. Parents may observe but not participate in the visit.

TYPICAL DAILY SCHEDULE

9:00 am Orientation

The children form a group to discuss the day's upcoming activities, learn about any new materials in the classroom, and resolve any problems from the previous day.

9:15 am Self-Directed Activities

Children are free to choose any activity in the room. In the mornings the emphasis is on language arts, mathematics, and science. Children may also help prepare morning snack at this time.

10:00 am Morning Snack

Children have snack together and talk freely.

10:15 am Group Time

Children participate in group activities related to the current unit theme, including a daily music activity.

10:30 am Project Time

Children participate in a group project related to the unit theme.

10:45 am Large Motor Time

Children engage in large-motor activities indoors or outdoors. This may include use of large-motor apparatus, cooperative games, dance, or movement activities.

11:15 am Self-Directed Activities

Children work in the classroom.

11:45 am Story Time

Children form a group to listen to stories.

12:00 n Lunch

Children have lunch together in the classroom.

12:30 pm Self-Directed Activities

Children work in the classroom. In the afternoons, the emphasis is on fine arts, small motor skills, and dramatic expression.

1:00 pm Large Motor Time

Children engage in large-motor activities indoors or outdoors.

1:30 pm Group Time

Children again participate in group activities related to the unit theme. At this time of day, the emphasis is on the humanities.

1:45 pm Project Time

Children again participate in a project related to the unit theme, also with an emphasis on the humanities.

2:00 pm Afternoon Snack

Children have snack together.

2:15 pm Self-Directed Activities

Children work in the classroom

2:45 pm Assessment

Children evaluate the day and address any problems that arose.

3:00 pm School Ends

To begin the enrollment process, an application form is required. On receipt of the application form and completion of the interview by the parent and the one-day visit by the child, Zimtor will either make an offer of admission or explain why the child is not eligible for admission. To complete enrollment if an offer of admission is made, all enrollment forms and a \$50 fee must be submitted. This is the only fee of any kind Zimtor charges. For required medical documents, see Health Records on page nine.

Children are admitted to Zimtor without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, or sex.

Intake

An intake conference in which both the child and at least one parent meet with the teacher/director is required before the child begins attendance. This conference provides an opportunity for the child and parent or parents to become oriented to the school and to discuss any information that will help make the transition to school go more smoothly.

Enrollment Limits

Enrollment with our present staff and classroom is limited to twenty children ages four through eleven. As enrollment and finances warrant, additional staff and classroom space will be added.

Waiting List

If applications by eligible children exceed the available spaces, a waiting list will be created. As spaces become available, children on the waiting list will be offered admission in the order they applied with the exception that priority will be given to siblings of enrolled children.

Termination by Parents

Parents may withdraw their child at any time. At least two weeks notice of withdrawal is requested. This provides an important transition period for both the child who is leaving and his or her classmates.

Termination by School

Termination may be initiated by the school if in the judgement of the teacher/director continued attendance would not be in the best interest of the child or the school. Reasons for termination include inability of the school to meet a child's special needs and irreconcilable differences between the school and the parents.

Two weeks notice of termination will be given to parents except when the child or parents are deemed to be an immediate threat to the safety of others at school.

PROGRAM POLICIES

Attendance

Because a child who attends school inconsistently disrupts the class both academically and socially, attendance at all class sessions is expected. Exceptions are made for illness or other conditions beyond the control of the family. In addition, children are allowed twenty personal days per calendar year when they can be absent for any reason. Parents must notify Zimtor of any absences as soon as possible in order to have the absences excused. Children who exceed the allowed absences may be terminated from the program at the discretion of the teacher/director.

Hours of Operation and Emergency Closing

We are open Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm twelve months a year. A half-day session from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon is optional for children ages four through six.

We are closed for major holidays. We also have traditional winter and spring breaks as well as one-week breaks at the beginning of summer and fall. A detailed calendar is sent home at the beginning of September and will also be available on our website at www.zimtor.org.

In the case of severe weather or similar emergencies, we will close or start late in accord with the Saint Paul Public Schools elementary schools. If an emergency arises which causes the closing of our school alone, parents will be notified by email, text message, or telephone.

Arrival and Departure

Bus service is provided without charge within a fifteen-mile radius of the school. If your child does not take the bus, arrival time is from 8:45 am to 9:00 am. Departure time is from 12:00 noon to 12:15 pm for children enrolled in the half-day session, and 3:00 pm to 3:15 pm for children enrolled in the full-day session. Your child will only be released to those people you have authorized in writing or by telephone. If the adult picking up your child is unknown to the teacher/director, some form of identification will be requested. You or the adult who picks up your child should meet your child in the classroom.

Arrival or departure outside of these times is disruptive to the class and will only be allowed under special circumstances. Please contact Zimtor if you know your child will be arriving or departing at an unusual time. Consistently late arrival or departure

may result in termination from the program at the discretion of the teacher/director.

Nutrition

As noted on the daily schedule, a morning snack, lunch, and an afternoon snack are included each day. The snacks are provided by Zimtor without charge. Lunch should be brought from home. Because we believe that nutritional patterns established in childhood may last throughout life, snacks are minimally processed and low in sugar and fat overall. For ethical reasons, all snacks are ovo-lacto vegetarian. Special snacks will be provided to accommodate allergies or dietary preferences.

Field Trips and Resource People

Field trips are an integral part of our program. Field trips are typically conducted every few weeks, usually as the conclusion to a unit.

You will be notified in writing of all field trips involving a car, van, or bus. When riding in a car, van, or bus, each child will be restrained by a federally approved restraint appropriate to his or her size and weight. No child will be placed in a seat protected by an air bag.

Resource people who have special skills or knowledge related to a unit are invited to visit our classroom regularly and are another important part of our program.

Clothing

Since children will be engaged in messy activities almost every day, please dress your child in clothes that your child can get dirty without causing concern, or provide such clothes for your child to change into.

Because we often go outside throughout the year, if the weather is cold please provide mittens or gloves, boots, a hat or hood, and a snowsuit or snow pants and a coat for your child.

Please be sure that one complete change of clothing appropriate to the season is always available at school for your child.

All clothing, including hats, boots, and mittens, should be marked with your child's name. A laundry marker is available at school for your use. A lost-and-found is maintained in the school. Unclaimed items are kept at school for emergency use.

Toys from Home

Because toys from home often cause distractions and conflicts, they are not allowed at school. Exceptions are made for toys that relate directly to the current unit. A weekly newsletter provides guidelines for what items are acceptable for each unit.

Electronics

Electronics from home of any kind are prohibited in the classroom. This rule applies to both children and adults. Children may bring cell phones to school if the phones remain in the their cubbies. Adults may bring cell phones to school if the phones remain off.

Pets

Pets are not kept in the classroom because we believe that such use of animals is abusive and teaches disrespect for life. Pets from home are welcome to visit if arrangements are made in advance with the teacher/director.

Food from Home

Food from home is not allowed except as part of lunch or when it is brought to share with all the children in celebration of a special event. The law prohibiting homemade food does not apply to Zimtor, so you are welcome to bring homemade food for special events. Food brought to share should conform to our food policy. That is, it should be minimally processed and low in sugar and fat. Acceptable snacks include:

- Fresh fruit
- Fruit kabobs
- Fruit salad
- Vegetables with low-fat dip
- Yogurt with unsweetened fruit
- Fruit-juice popsicles
- Popcorn

If you are uncertain about what to bring, please ask us. We'll be happy to help you make a choice.

Birthday Parties

We celebrate every child's birthday. Shortly before the celebration a form will be sent home asking you to recount the major events in your child's life so that we may share them with the other children.

You are welcome to bring a special birthday snack for your child's birthday party, but we ask that it conform to our food policy as noted in the Food from Home section above.

GUIDANCE POLICIES

General Guidance Policies

We attempt to take a problem-solving approach to guidance. When a child's behavior creates a problem for others, the teacher first tells the child in what way

his or her behavior is causing a problem. For example, the teacher might say, "When you lean back in your chair, I get worried that the chair may break and you may get hurt." Next, the teacher asks the child to think of possible solutions to the problem. If generating solutions is too difficult for the child, the teacher may provide two or three solutions to choose from. The teacher might say, "You could use another chair that's more comfortable or you could work on the carpet." Finally, the child and the teacher agree on a solution together.

Conflicts between children are approached in a similar way. The teacher first encourages each child to describe the problem. Then the teacher asks the children to think of possible solutions, and finally the children choose a solution together.

If a child is too upset or confused to engage in such a problem-solving procedure, the teacher may attempt to redirect the child by introducing the child to a new activity. If a child is extremely upset or out of control, the teacher may isolate the child in a quiet area of the room until the child calms down. As soon as the child is ready to rejoin the group, he or she is welcomed back.

Harassment

All personal attacks, including ad-hominem attacks, name calling, bullying, harassment, assault in its legal sense, and battery are strictly prohibited at Zimtor. Every child and adult is subject to this restriction. All such incidents are dealt with by problem solving involving all persons involved. If repeated problem-solving attempts fail to resolve the issue, the person carrying out the attacks may be required to leave the school at the discretion of the teacher/director.

For additional rules for parents, see Parent Behavior at School on page ten.

Aggressive Fantasy Play

At Zimtor, we view aggressive fantasy play, such as play involving pretend weapons, as a normal part of development for many children. Through carefully supervised aggressive fantasy play, we believe that children come to understand aggression better and learn to control their own aggressive impulses. For these reasons, we allow aggressive fantasy play at Zimtor as long as it does not threaten to harm children physically or emotionally. As in all types of play, the teacher attempts to direct the play constructively. For example, if two children spend a prolonged period shooting at each other with finger guns, the teacher might ask how they feel when they get shot, and what other ways their fantasy characters could use to resolve their problems.

Zimtor provides no toy weapons or other materials with aggressive themes, and toys from home are not allowed. Therefore, whatever aggressive fantasy play occurs at Zimtor is initiated solely by the children. Actual aggression is never allowed, and our overall approach to conflicts attempts to teach children how to resolve problems in creative, non-aggressive ways.

For a more detailed discussion of this approach to aggressive fantasy play, see the following two books:

Nancy Carlson-Paige and Diane E. Levin. *The War Play Dilemma: Balancing Needs and Values in the Early Childhood Classroom*. New York: Teacher's College Press, 1987.

Nancy Carlson-Paige and Diane E. Levin. *Who's Calling the Shots: How to Respond Effectively to Children's Fascination with War Play and War Toys*. Santa Cruz, CA: New Society Publishers, 1990.

Both books are available for loan from the Zimtor library.

Masturbation and Sexual Play

Because families vary widely in their attitudes toward masturbation and sexual play, we respond to masturbation and sexual play as follows. If children engage in masturbation or sexual play, we tell them that it is something they may do only at home and only if it is allowed by their parents. If sexual play appears to be motivated primarily by curiosity, we also introduce the children to age-appropriate books and other materials on sexuality.

Appropriate Touch between Teacher and Child

We believe that young children come to feel accepted and valued through physical touch, and we therefore view physical touch as a crucial part of the education of young children. We recognize, however, that physical touch can easily become abusive, and children at Zimtor always have the right to refuse to be touched, except where health or safety are involved. The following types of touch between teacher and child are considered appropriate at Zimtor:

- Affectionate, non-sexual touch, including hugging, holding on lap, rocking, carrying, rubbing or patting back, and holding hands. Children always have the right to refuse this kind of touch.
- Personal care touch, including assistance with cleaning, dressing, and toileting. Genital and anal areas are touched only for the purpose of hygiene.
- Physical restraint to the minimum extent neces-

sary to protect others.

In general, we see touch between teacher and child as appropriate if both are willing participants and if the touch is neither sexual nor aggressive in nature.

Transsexuality

Zimtor believes that sex is biologically determined and cannot be changed by subjective choice. We also believe that choice of pronouns is the right of the speaker to determine. However, all facilities and programs are available to everyone regardless of sex. We have no locker rooms or showers, and all bathrooms are for one person only. Demeaning or bullying behavior of any kind is prohibited by our general policies. Because transsexuality is a controversial area, we welcome the expression of views that differ from our policies, including formal presentations during class time.

Fairness

Every attempt is made to treat students as individuals, regardless of any group identity. Every student is expected to master the same rigorous curriculum and is evaluated by the same standards. That curriculum includes mathematics, science, and language arts in their traditional forms, although taught in the context of a progressive project approach and continuous progress. Students who have difficulty learning a particular subject are provided extra help until they have fully understood the subject; students who find learning a particular subject easy are encouraged to move forward in that subject.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health Records

An immunization history for your child from an allopathic medical provider must be submitted before your child can be enrolled. All immunizations must be current according to the schedule of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). If exceptions for medical reasons have been made, they must be in accord with the CDC schedule and noted on the history. Zimtor does not allow exceptions to the CDC schedule for religious or ethical reasons. However, we do not require any Covid vaccines.

A report signed by a licensed allopathic physician regarding your child's health must also be submitted before your child can be enrolled.

If the teacher/director believes there is anything

questionable in the immunization history or the medical report, the teacher/director may require an evaluation by an allopathic physician of the teacher/director's choosing.

Exclusion from Class Due to Illness

Please do not bring your child to school if he or she has any of the following symptoms::

- Oral temperature 100 degrees or higher.
- Difficult or rapid breathing or severe coughing.
- Recurring diarrhea.
- Recurring vomiting.
- Severe drainage from nose or eye.
- Sore throat.
- Skin rash or draining sores.
- Persistent itching.
- Unusual color of eyes, skin, stool, or urine.
- Behavior indicating distress or pain.

If your child shows any of these symptoms during the school day, you or a person you have specified as an emergency contact will be notified, and you or the emergency contact must pick up your child as soon as possible.

If your child has been free of symptoms for twenty-four hours, or if you supply a signed statement from a licensed allopathic physician stating that your child does not pose a risk of infectious disease to others, he or she may return to school.

Consistent violation of this policy will result in termination from the program.

Notification of Infectious Diseases

You will be notified in writing whenever your child has been exposed to an infectious disease at school. Please notify us within twenty-four hours if your child contracts an infectious disease.

Administration of Medication

We will administer medication to your child if you complete and sign a medication permission form. These forms are available at school. Prescription medications must be provided in the original prescription bottle. You may wish to ask your pharmacist to supply the prescription in two bottles so that one bottle can stay at school. Over-the-counter medications must be accompanied by a signed note from a licensed allopathic physician with instructions for dosage and administration.

If you have given written permission, we will administer syrup of ipecac to your child if instructed to do so by the local poison control center.

Emergency Care Procedure

In the event of an accident or illness that requires medical attention, we will administer first aid and, if necessary, call an ambulance. If warranted in the judgement of the ambulance medic, your child will be taken to the nearest hospital emergency room.

For minor injuries or illnesses, we will provide you with a written accident report. For more serious injuries or illnesses, we will also immediately contact you or a person you have specified as an emergency contact by text message or telephone.

Updating of Emergency Information

If there is any change in the emergency and health information you have provided us with, please complete new forms as soon as possible.

Smoking

Neither smoking nor vaping are allowed anywhere at Zimtor. Tobacco products that do not pose a risk to others, such as snuff, are allowed.

Fire and Storm Procedures

In the event of a fire, the children will be evacuated outside by the most direct route. All children and adults will meet at the playground. The teacher/director will verify that every child is present. Children will not return to the building until the fire department has approved re-entry.

In the event of a severe storm warning, as defined by the National Weather Service, the children will be evacuated to center of the basement. All children and adults will meet in this area. The teacher/director will bring a battery-operated radio to the basement and will verify that every child is present. Children will not leave this basement until the severe storm warning has expired.

Both a fire drill and a severe storm drill will be carried out each month, and a log of these drills will be kept at school.

Insurance

We carry liability insurance covering all injuries to children in our care.

PARENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Communication

The activities of the class are reported through a

10 Parent Handbook

weekly newsletter. Your child's progress is reported through quarterly written evaluations which your child helps write and through two parent conferences each year, one in November and one in May. Children are encouraged to participate in these conferences.

Please feel free to contact the teacher/director if you have any concerns or questions at any time.

Visiting

You are welcome to visit Zimtor any time during our hours of operation. Please make an appointment ahead of time so that we can avoid having too many visitors in the classroom at once.

Parent Permission

Your written permission will be obtained before your child is allowed to participate in any field trip other than walks in the neighborhood.

Your written permission will also be obtained before your child is allowed to participate in any type of research project, experimental procedure, or public relations activity at school.

Parent Behavior at School

In order to maintain a safe and secure environment for children, parents are not allowed to humiliate, threaten, or physically discipline either their own children or other children at school. If such behavior is observed, the parent will be asked to leave the school temporarily.

Grievance Procedures

If you are unhappy with any aspect of your child's experience at Zimtor, please contact the teacher/director. If the teacher/director is unable to resolve the problem to your satisfaction, you may contact the board of directors through the teacher/director.

The academic aspects of the program are regulated by the Saint Paul Public Schools Superintendent, 651-767-8152. Health and safety are regulated by the Minnesota Department of Education, 651-582-8200, and the Minnesota State Fire Marshall, 651-201-7200. However, we hope you will discuss your concerns with us before you contact any regulatory official.

FINANCES

Tuition and Fees

Except for the \$50 enrollment fee, Zimtor charges no

tuition or fees of any kind, and no supplies or equipment need be provided by students. All program activities, supplies, and equipment are provided free for all enrolled students. There are no exceptions.

Funding

Zimtor is supported entirely by an endowment and by donations. We welcome donations of all kinds. Zimtor is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and all donations are tax deductible.

OBTAINING FURTHER INFORMATION

Additional information regarding health and safety policies is available in our Health and Safety Manual, now in development. Please ask for a copy if this information is of interest to you.

If you have any questions that the Parent Handbook and the Health and Safety Manual do not answer, please contact the teacher/director.

