

THE PHOENIX SCHOOL



PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK 2007/2008*

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School Hours

9:00 AM to 2:30 PM
M - F

Office Hours

8:30 AM to 6:00 PM

INTRODUCTION

The Phoenix School is a 1st through 12th grade independent school. Our philosophy is based upon a profound respect for children and recognition of their innate desire to learn. We believe that the purpose of education is to provide a carefully planned, stimulating environment that will help children develop within themselves the habits, attitudes, skills, and ideas which are essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning.

Partnerships between the school and the family help to insure that a continued joy of learning, as well as intellectual and social discipline, becomes an inherent, lifelong quality.

We invite you to take part in our school activities as we build a strong school/home partnership to further assure that your child will be successful this year and in future learning endeavors. The information on the following pages is provided to familiarize you with the policies and procedures of our school. These policies are designed for the welfare of all of our students and families.

Philosophy:

As a community of learners, The Phoenix School is a collaboration of professionals who are deeply committed to an educational philosophy of "students at the center." We place great importance on the unique and holistic nature of students; therefore, we regard each student's individual learning style as a gift to be expressed, shared and valued in our classrooms. The community of the Phoenix School strives constantly to develop a spirit of respect, responsibility and a right to learn. This commitment is represented in our daily interactions. Our model must be exemplary, as we believe that the children are always watching.

Mission:

To foster student success through climate, character, collaboration and curriculum. The needs of children are at the center of decision-making.

Vision:

To be nationally recognized as a model of best practices in teaching and learning as we take education to the edge of possibility.

GOALS

Each student at the Phoenix School will be presented with many opportunities that will help him/her to:

- develop a positive attitude toward school and learning.
- develop the skills and confidence to become a lifelong seeker of knowledge.
- develop into a self-reliant, responsible, and persistent learner in a democratic society.
- develop critical thinking skills by using problem solving, decision-making, and positive conflict resolution.
- exercise their creativity, curiosity, and limitless imagination.
- develop into a caring, environmentally conscious citizen of the natural world.
- acquire the tools to use technology constructively and wisely.
- set reachable goals that expand personal potential.
- acquire a core of knowledge necessary for future success.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Phoenix School is a non-sectarian, private, independent, laboratory school operating under the umbrella of the Phoenix School LLC, an Educational Research and Consulting Company.

The Phoenix School maintains a low student/teacher ratio within multi-age classrooms where the emphasis is on small group instruction. The school offers a broad student-centered curriculum, which stresses flexibility and individualized attention. This setting is further enhanced through peer tutoring and a method of progression based upon student readiness and desire, rather than arbitrarily predetermined by age or grade level.

The Phoenix School is registered with the State of Florida and the Internal Revenue Service as an educational organization.

The Phoenix School is driven by its philosophy and mission statement and is student centered by design. When policy is set or reviewed, the issue or problem always comes full circle to the students: "What is best for the student?"

GENERAL INFORMATION

The following policies and procedures were developed to facilitate our desire to maintain a responsive, fair, safe, secure, and continual learning environment at the Phoenix School. Often, much of what a student learns is through routine and modeling. The success of our partnership, as we invest with you in your child's future, depends partially upon cooperative understanding and compliance with these policies. If these present a hardship for you, please contact the school Director.

We ask that you closely review the following information with ***special attention*** to the following items *that affect our daily programs in significant ways*:

- Attendance (Absences; Arrival and Dismissal; Tardiness)
- Behavior and School Guidelines
- Communication
- Dress Code
- Homework
- Illness, Injuries, and Emergency Procedures
- Medications/Health Requirements
- Tuition Payments
- Volunteers

Attendance

The Phoenix School requires students to attend classes punctually and regularly. Regular attendance at school is obviously important to students' successful progress in their learning program. When they are absent, they often miss out on instruction that is difficult or impossible to fully make up. Therefore, regular school attendance is required unless the student is ill. The school **does** keep records of each student's attendance.

Absences

If your child will not be attending school on a given day, please call the office or notify the respective teacher in a timely manner. All work missed due to absences must be made up.

Doctor appointments should be made outside school hours, whenever possible.

Arrival and Dismissal

In the morning, parents of elementary and middle school students are to drop their children off in the classroom with a teacher or staff member present. High School students are to check in upon arrival. In the afternoon, parents will pick their children up elementary and middle school students in the classroom with a teacher or staff member present. High School students must check out with a staff member.

Parents are not to allow their children to be unattended in the school parking lot. No child will be permitted to leave the classroom to meet a parent at another location on or off campus without being escorted by a teacher or staff member.

High School students who drive to school must park in the building parking lot and not in the adjacent lot.

Tardiness

Tardiness is defined as not being in the classroom at the time a class period begins unless there is a valid reason for being late, such as illness, doctor or dental appointments, family emergencies, or other justifiable reasons.

We believe that the value of time and promptness should be instilled in all students. Students will be marked tardy if they are more than 10 minutes late.

When students are late to class, it is a disruptive interruption to the teacher's teaching and other students' learning. It takes additional teacher time to explain directions and get the student working. Valuable instructional time is lost for the teacher and other members of the class. Please make a concerted effort to get your child to class on time.

Behavior and School Guidelines

At the Phoenix School, we maintain the esteem, worth, and dignity of others and ourselves. Courtesy, respect, manners, appropriate conflict-resolution, caring, cooperation, and collaboration are essential to the program. These skills are taught, modeled, reinforced, and as part of our daily routine.

From the first day of school, the students and the staff become part of our “Community of Learners.” They learn the principles of the community, which read as follows:

At the Phoenix School:

- We respect the rights of others.
- We maintain self-esteem and the dignity and worth of others and ourselves.
- We show that we care about what we do, our families, our class, our school, our whole environment, and ourselves.
- We have positive control.
- We think before we act and choose to use our own power to solve problems appropriately.
- We choose to be actively involved.
- We celebrate learning, life, and laughter.

Classroom Management

We feel that learning takes place in a safe and warm environment. In order to remain a member of the Phoenix School community, each student must demonstrate growth towards respect for the rights of others. Students must know what is expected of them and the positive and negative consequences of their behavior. **In this way, students take responsibility for their actions.**

Community Management

Each student in the Phoenix School community is encouraged to develop into a self-disciplined and responsible learner. Students are empowered by using problem-solving skills and developing positive ways to resolve conflict. The overriding guideline is respect for oneself, respect for others, and respect for the environment.

Specific “limits” are discussed and implemented during the first weeks of the school year and reinforced throughout the year. The purpose of each guideline is to keep the environment safe for everyone. Students are encouraged to stop and think about the choices they make. They are strongly encouraged to use words rather than physical force when confronted with a difficult situation.

Community Management continued

The natural consequences of behavior, whether positive or negative, are the driving forces behind behavior management. Students learn that wise choices bring positive consequences and unwise choices bring negative consequences. This encourages each student to take charge of his/her learning and allows others to learn as well.

Serious infractions of the rules may result in suspension or expulsion at the discretion of the Director.

Special Occasions

If you wish to provide a special treat for your child's birthday, please contact your child's teacher in advance of the special day. If you are planning a party at home and all the Phoenix School students are not included, please do not deliver invitations to the classroom. This will help us avoid dealing with uncomfortable situations.

Communication

We will do our best to make sure all newsletters, announcements, notices, reports, and other important papers make it home to parents or guardians. We prefer to send such items electronically, but understand that some families would prefer hard copy communication.

Conferences and Observations

Parent conferences for the formal purpose of sharing student progress are scheduled twice a year, in January and May. Our partnership in educating your child will also depend upon communication and informal conferences throughout the year. We encourage you to schedule meetings often with your child's teacher in order to get an accurate picture of your child's progress. Quarterly reports will be sent home.

Cultural Celebrations

The Phoenix School is proudly a multi-cultural, multi-heritage school. Holidays are celebrated through planned activities at the discretion of the teachers. Special care is taken to insure that students acquire a global understanding and appreciation of the rituals and beliefs of various cultures.

Dress Code

Please label everything that your child wears or brings to school including books, lunch boxes, backpacks, jackets, sweaters, coats, etc.

- Students may wear casual attire that is clean and in good repair.
- No offensive logos, emblems, or pictures are allowed on clothing.
- Teachers and administrators have the authority to deem attire inappropriate and contact parents for a change in clothing.

Please note that if a student is inappropriately dressed, it may be necessary for his/her parents to bring an appropriate change of clothing to school for the student. Remember that clothing which detracts from the learning process impacts all in the classroom.

Field Experiences (Field Trips)

Field experiences are an integral part of any well-balanced curriculum. Because of our approach to learning, this is especially true at the Phoenix School. Field experiences may be scheduled as guest appearances or excursions away from campus. All field experiences away from school will be chaperoned by teachers and/or parents or other adult volunteers. These will be announced in advance, and each student will be required to bring a signed permission slip to participate in the activity. Most field experiences will require special fees from each student. Each student must wear attire appropriate for the excursion.

Field Experience Transportation

Things to remember on field experiences:

1. In order for a parent to drive on a field experience, the school office **MUST** have a copy of that parent's driver's license and current auto-liability insurance prior to leaving school property.
2. Every student **MUST** wear a seat belt in a vehicle.
3. When a parent chaperones on a field experience she/he is there as an extension of the staff. Please follow the instructions of the teachers and be a resource for all the students in the group, not just your child.
4. When traveling on a commercial bus line, there are no seat belts, so keeping everyone seated is most important. Chaperones should sit among the students to help them stay safe.
5. On field experiences, all parent consent forms and contact forms must be carried in the vehicle(s) in case of emergencies.
6. Please do not purchase items for students you are chaperoning, in fairness to those in other groups. Unless designated, the Phoenix School does not encourage souvenir shopping on field experiences.
7. Siblings are not permitted to attend field experiences when deemed inappropriate.

Homework

Homework is given when it is a necessary extension of an in class activity. Middle School and High School students can expect homework as part of daily course work.

Illness, Injuries and Emergency Procedures

Emergency instructions and waivers are required from each family as part of the registration documents. These instructions help us to act quickly and precisely in the event of an accident or illness. You are responsible for notifying us of any changes in information so that we may contact you in an emergency situation. Please keep us up-to-date.

If your child is absent due to highly contagious (communicable) diseases, such as chicken pox, strep throat, conjunctivitis, etc., please notify the school as soon as possible. We cannot permit students with fever, cough, nasal discharge, rashes, diarrhea, vomiting, sore throat or any other symptoms of contagious illness to enter the learning communities. A student must be fever free (below 100°) for 24 hours before returning to school.

If your child becomes ill at school, a parent or emergency contact will be notified and requested to pick up the child immediately in order to limit the spread of contagious diseases. Please make arrangements with a relative or friend in the event this occurs and we are unable to contact you.

If a student is seriously injured at school, the parent will be notified immediately. If a student requires immediate life-saving attention, she/he will be transported via ambulance to the nearest emergency facility, unless the emergency card on file indicates otherwise.

Lunch

Each student must bring a lunch to school. We request your help in providing a nutritionally balanced meal so that your child may continue through the afternoon in an optimal learning mode. We prefer that candy and high sugar items not be included as these types of carbohydrates may cause problems that interfere with learning. High School students may eat off campus, but must have written permission from a parent or guardian to do so.

Medications/Health Requirements

The appropriate health documents must be completed within the first three weeks of school. If your child requires administration of prescriptive medication, proof of the written order (usually the prescription's label) specifically for the child must be provided along with written parental authorization to administer the medication. Our staff, as prescribed by the doctor, will closely adhere to dosages. Any change in dosage from the provided written order must be in writing from the child's doctor.

Over-the-counter medications require written parental authorization before they may be taken at school. This includes aspirin, pain-relievers, cough drops, cough syrups, or lozenges. All medications must remain with the teacher.

Messages

We will make every attempt to give students any important messages from home for the purpose of unavoidable change of plans, safety/security, or family emergencies.

Personal Belongings

Please label all clothing and personal belongings that your child may wear or bring to school. Your child's teacher will better define items for any planned activities, which students may bring to school. If you have any questions about a particular item, contact your child's teacher.

Safety Procedures

Fire drill procedures

Every month, the school will conduct a fire drill. The students will leave the building in a quiet and orderly manner with the teachers taking a careful count as they go.

Pick-Up Procedures

The Phoenix School requires advanced, written permission for a student to be picked up by anyone who is not listed on the Emergency Form as a designated contact. All designees will be required to present photo I.D. Please make sure they are prepared.

School Year Organization

Our school year begins in mid-August. One week prior to the students' arrival, teachers participate in a full week of pre-planning which includes administrative meetings, brainstorming sessions, community planning, and classroom preparation.

A few weeks into the school year, parents and teachers meet at our first Open House. Schedules, curriculum, and student routines are all topics of discussion at this informal gathering.

On several occasions during the year, school is closed to students only; these are teacher "work days" and parent/teacher conference days. Teachers use this time to meet with parents and attend special focus conferences.

Siblings/School Visitors

Siblings may accompany a parent to school for short visits; however, during these times they must be under the close supervision of the parent and adhere to our school guidelines. If the younger child causes a disruption, we depend upon the parent to remove the child from the learning community immediately. The school is not liable for any injury to non-enrolled students.

Smoking

The Phoenix School is a smoke-free school. Smoking is not allowed in the school at any time.

Tuition

Your timely tuition payments are vital to our financial stability. All tuition payments are due and payable per the terms of the enrollment contract. Payments become overdue on the 10th, at which time late payment fees will be assessed. After the 20th of each month, if the tuition payment has not been made, it may be necessary to restrict the student's admittance to the Phoenix School until payment is received.

Visitors

Visitors and volunteers are expected to check-in with the school before proceeding to the learning community.

Volunteers

We gratefully and enthusiastically welcome your talents and time. Volunteers who work in the school or directly with students require a full background check by the State of Florida and FBI in advance. Finger Print cards are provided by the School. For more information, please see the Phoenix School Volunteer Guidelines.

Volunteer Confidentiality Form

Student Privacy and Volunteer Confidentiality

Students at The Phoenix School have the right to expect that information about them will be kept confidential by all volunteers. Additionally, the U.S. congress has addressed the privacy-related concerns of educators, parents, and students by enacting the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (known more commonly as “FERPA” or the “Buckley Amendment”).

- Each student with whom you work has the right to expect that **nothing** that happens to or about him or her will be repeated to anyone other than authorized school employees, as designated by the administrators at your school. Even when discussing a student with those who **are** directly involved in a student’s education, such as a teacher, principal, or guidance counselor, you may not share otherwise confidential information with them unless it is relevant to the student’s educational growth, safety, or well being.
- You may not share information about a student **even** with others who are genuinely interested in the student’s welfare, such as social workers, scout leaders, clergy, or nurses/physicians (a grave medical emergency, in which confidential information may be necessary for a student’s care, is the only exception). Thus, you must refer all such questions to the school employees so authorized and indicated to you, typically the student’s teacher or principal.
- Parents, friends, or community members may in good faith ask you questions about a student’s problems or progress. Again, you must refer all such questions to the authorized school employees. You may not share information about a student even with members of you own family or the student’s family.
- Before you speak, always remember that violating a student’s confidentiality isn’t just impolite; it’s **against the law!**

Agreement

I, (print name) _____, as a volunteer at The Phoenix School agree never to disclose information about a student’s records to anyone other than an authorized school employee. I will refer all requests for such information from those not directly involved in the student’s education to authorized school department employees.

Signature _____ Date _____

Glossary of Educational Terms

Advisory/Community Circle:

An advisory/community circle is an organized group of at least one adult and a group of students that serves as the students' first line of affiliation in their school. The group meets at least once daily to discuss interests, successes, issues and concerns, usually for the first and last 15 minutes or so of the day. This program, endorsed by the National Middle School Association, ensures that there is an adult advocate for every adolescent throughout his or her middle school experience.

Authentic Assessment:

Projects, performances, demonstrations, and exhibitions mirror the applications found in the real world; therefore, they are authentic. A variety of multi-dimensional assessments are used at The Phoenix School to gain a richer understanding of each student's progress.

Centers:

Centers are learning stations where students can access resources and participate in hands-on activities. Centers are structured to support both social and academic learning. For example, a dramatic play center may include; clothes, props, puppets, etc. It supports oral language development, fosters social skills and creativity, and nurtures critical thinking. A math center may include blocks, manipulatives, flash cards, etc. It supports logical thinking and creative problem solving.

Cooperative Learning:

Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning.

Focus Group:

Small, developmentally appropriate groups that meet for direct instruction of basics in reading, writing and math.

Generative Topic:

Generative topics "generate" use of critical thinking skills through broad-based theme that affords students the opportunity to investigate topics using methods of inquiry, exploration and/or problem solving. Generative topics encourage relevant connections to content.

Guided Reading:

Guided reading is teacher-led, skill-based reading instruction utilizing real literature.

Integrated Studies/Curriculum:

Multiple content area concepts are integrated around a generative topic, theme or unit of study within the community. Through the use of integrated studies, students realize the relevant connections that exist authentically between content areas. In short, no knowledge is relevant in isolation; therefore, The Phoenix School seeks to create learning situations and activities that mirror relevant, real world conditions.

Literature Circle/Book Clubs:

These are groups of students who meet regularly to discuss and analyze literature. Depending on developmental appropriateness, these groups may be teacher-directed, student-led or a combination of both.

Multi-age:

At The Phoenix School, students are mixed by age as well as grade level. This mixing fosters positive physical, social, emotional and cognitive growth. This “mixing” of ages mirrors the multiage setting that exists within families and other real world social groupings.

Multiple Intelligences:

All people have natural strengths that fall under the following identified categories: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist and existentialist intelligences. Educators at The Phoenix School seek to identify different strengths and areas that need strengthening as they guide students to continuous learning.

Portfolios:

Portfolios are collections of physical evidence to document students’ abilities to meet curricular goals and learning objectives. The objective of the use of portfolio is to encourage students to collect, reflect and evaluate their learning over time, and to identify goals and objectives for improving knowledge and skills in the future.

Rubric:

A rubric is a printed set of guidelines that denotes specific criteria for an assignment and/or observable behaviors that will be evaluated.

Shared Reading:

Shared reading is a teacher-guided, interactive reading experience for beginning readers.

Theme:

A theme is a unit of study centralized around a broad topic in which specific curriculum requirements are integrated through real-world experiences. Examples of themes could include: animal habitats, inventions, patterns, or mysteries. The theme becomes the vehicle through which teachers facilitate instruction.

****Please note that all items in the Phoenix School Handbook are subject to amendment. Amendments will be made available to all enrolled families.***