



Parent Handbook

Welcome

We are so glad that you are partaking in this kind of Nature Connection, Social/Emotional/Play learning environment for your Pre-schooler. The intention of this handbook is to aid you throughout the year with the many areas that you might have questions about or need some instructions for. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at 415-419-5274 or email tendertracks@gmail.com. Your questions just might be what needs to be added to this important information for someone else as well.

Thank you for taking the time to read all of this and making not only your child's experience at Tender Tracks more fulfilling, but yours as well.

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2017/2018 CALENDAR

IMPORTANT DATES	
Sept 9	Back to School Picnic
Sept 12	First Day of Tues/Thurs. Class
Sept 13	First Day of Weds. Class
Sept 23	Back to School Night for parents
June 6	Last Day of Weds. Class
June 7	Last Day of Tues/Thurs. Class
ALL SCHOOL GATHERINGS	
Oct 28	Harvest Festival
March 24	Spring Festival
PARENT/TEACHER PHONE CONFERENCES	
Month of October	
Month of March	
3-PART PARENT CLASS SERIES	
Mandatory for one parent	
November 11, 2017	
February 10, 2018	
April 14, 2018	
NO CLASS	
Nov 21-23	Thanksgiving Break
Dec 19-28	Winter Holiday Break
Feb 20-22	February Break
May 1-3	May Break

M	T	W	Th	F	S
September 2017					
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4	5	6	7	8	9
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18	19	20	21	22	23
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October					
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23	24	25	26	27	28
30	31				
November					
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January 2018					
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M	T	W	Th	F	S
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April					
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June					
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Arrival and Departure

Drop off and Pick-up:

Peri Park, Park Road, Fairfax (where the Redwood trees are past the play yard)

Wednesdays: 9 to 1

Tuesday/Thursday: 9 to 2

If you are going to be late, please call and/or text 650-248-0426.

When bringing your child into the bus please allow us to buckle them up. We ask that you say your good byes and depart from the bus as soon as it feels comfortable for you and your child.

Upon our arrival back, please wait away from the bus for all in the bus to have room to come out with all of their belongings. It can get very chaotic and troublesome when parents are right at the entry of the door. Please keep siblings off the bus until everyone is out and there is then room for them.

What to Bring

Please label all of your children's clothing, lunch containers and water bottles.

- Child-size backpack
- Their own lunch and water each day, in reusable containers
- Full rain gear for the winter: rain boots, rain coat, rain pants, warm socks, fleece and/or wool
- Soft soled shoes (i.e. tennis shoes, keens, moccasins). AVOID heavy duty hiking boots and NO CROCKS.

Please read the following explanations of what to bring:

Child-size backpack

Good backpacks can be found at REI. Please make sure these are not adult or middle aged child size backpacks. If you cannot find one, I will find one for your child to use for the year. If it is too big, it greatly weighs them down.

Food and Beverages

Each day children bring their own lunch plus water. **Tender Tracks is an eco-friendly school and requires reusable containers for your child's lunches.** Liquids such as yogurt or juices **MUST** be in a reusable containers as they can become quite a mess otherwise. The very cute little juice boxes and yogurt squeezes are not only environmentally unsound, but they often make a very large mess somewhere.

There are many grand non-toxic alternatives for carrying children's food for lunch. See examples at <http://to-goware.com> and Whole Foods has many choices as well.

In addition, please NO CANDY, SUPER HALLOWEEN TYPE CANDIES and the like. Thank you for your cooperation with this. Fresh fruit, raisins, natural fruit rolls and the like are good alternatives.

Winter Clothes

During winter and cold days, fleece or wool are the recommended materials. Cotton is rendered useless the moment that water or perspiration comes in contact with it. This can not be stressed enough. Many thrift stores have a lot of these things for children. This is another great way to recycle as well!

In cold weather either two pairs of socks or, better yet, a pair of wool socks must be worn with their boots. A winter jacket or fleece needs to be under their rain suit. No thin cotton shirts or little dresses. Layering is the rule of thumb. Also, please always have in their back packs during the winter season two bread shaped plastic bags. These are for when their feet get wet and they need to put their boots on again. We just put the plastic bags over their socks and then their feet stay dry in the wet boots.

Any extra clothes in their back pack must be in a sealed plastic bag otherwise, there is no point in putting them in the pack as they will get wet on rainy or wet days.

During the wet season please bring along an extra pair of shoes for the end of the day so they have some kind of warmth to put on their feet while driving back to you and then going wherever you go afterwards.

Thrift Stores

Thrift stores are fabulous places to really get into the recycling mode, and for Tender Tracks it is perfect. The children most often come home quite dirty and used clothes can add that little extra sense of freedom to letting them “trash” their clothes.

Clothing Suggestions

It is very helpful if you have clothes that are designated just for Tender Tracks. Please make sure that the clothes they wear are clothes that can get dirty or ripped.

Rain Gear

During the rainy months a very good rain suit (coat and pants) and rain boots are an absolute necessity! No umbrellas. **Rainy day tip:** Keep the rain pants on the outside of the boots, not tucked in. When they are tucked in water can get in right away when they jump into puddles.

On rainy days PLEASE have them come fully prepared. Even if it doesn't look like rain but it rained the night before or it COULD rain, the best motto is: BE PREPARED. Or, when in doubt, bring all of their rain gear any way. Better to have than to have not in this case. If a child comes blatantly ill prepared for the weather, we will do our best with what we have to dress them appropriately. If this is not possible, they will then be sent home. Therefore, they MUST have good rain pants, rain boots and rain coat.

Resources for where to buy backpacks and clothing:

<http://www.deuter.com/DE/en/kids/schmusebaer-3612017.html>

<https://marmot.com/products/details/kids-half-hitch>

<https://www.amazon.com/Playshoes-Unisex-Baby-Kids-Pants/dp/B00TEUA2XW>

<http://shop.sofeandlencee.com/main.sc>

<https://oakiwear.com>

If you sew, you can get great rain material at a store in Oregon called the Rain Shed (<http://www.therainshed.com/fabrics.htm>). I mail order my material from them. Thank you for your cooperation. This makes your child's experience and the other children's experience that much more enjoyable and enables greater outdoor ease and comfort.

Shoes

Lightweight shoes or moccasins are really good for Tender Trackers during the warmer days. The lighter the sole of the shoe, the more able they are to connect to the Earth and the easier for them to walk around. Children have a tendency to trip and fall far more easily when they are wearing bulky shoes.

No Crocs of any kind or flipflops are permitted.

Extra Clothes bag

This is a bag provided to you for the year and to be returned at the end of the year. Inside is a plastic bag. How this gets used:

- Fill it with a full set of clothes that is appropriate for the current season. Please check every time that weather changes.
- If they get wet at Tender Tracks we will put their wet clothes in the plastic bag and use the clothes that you supplied. You will then re-stock the bag and bring it back to Tender Tracks the next day that you come. Please replace the plastic bag as well.

Sometimes they also wind up using Tender Tracks extra clothes. If something doesn't look like yours it most likely belongs to Tender Tracks. Please return that as well, as we use our extra clothes a great deal.

Where We Go

To find out where we are going for the day, check the calendar on the website (<https://tendertracks.com/calendar/>). At the beginning of the week, we post where we will be going each day. Double check, however on the bus grease board that is to your left upon entering the bus.

Tender Tracks Birthday Parties

3-year-olds: These parties are very simple. We just ask that the parents bring a snack that day for your child. If their birthdays are in the summer they will then be celebrated at the end of the school year.

4-year-olds: These birthday parties are a bit more elaborate, with a special story and circle. **What is needed from the Parents:** About two weeks before your child's birthday, you will receive an email asking for simple milestones from your child's life. The information you send will then be incorporated into a little Birthday story. They then get sung to and receive a special Tender Tracks gift from the Earth.

Here are some typical examples of simple milestones:

- **0 to 1 years old:** They said their first word, "ball." They visited Aunt Mable in Colorado in the spring and took their first airplane ride.
- **1 to 2 years old:** Had their first swimming lesson.
- **2 to 3 years old:** Became a big sister and flew to Hawaii. They swam with the turtles and loved it.
- **3 to 4 years old:** Learned to ride a two wheeler, jumped off Uncle Henry's boat and swam all the way to the dock when no one else could.
- **4 years old to current:** Met her cousins for the first time, loves going out every night and looking at the moon.

Tender Tracks Family Gatherings

All Family Harvest and Spring Festivals

These are very special gatherings. We join together during these times of year to celebrate pivotal moments during every year. It is a great time to gain a greater connection to your child's world at Tender Tracks, Nature and the other families and children.

We will be playing games, having nature experiences and partaking in joyful celebrations of the season of the year.

Both festivals take place on a Saturday morning. Place TBD.
(Please check the school calendar for the dates).

Last Day of School

The last day of school is the Wednesday and/or Thursday of the first week in June.

For both classes: This is a day where the parents bring their children to Lake Lagunitas by 9:15 and the day ends by 12/12:30 pm. Bring lunch for you and your child.

For the Tuesday/Thursday class: This is a day of great celebration with adventures and ceremony. It has always been experienced as a very special end-of-the-year day. Your presence is vital for this ending of the year.

Hazards

No matter where we go, where we live or what we are doing, there are always some kind of hazards to be mindful of. At Tender Tracks there are a few that we thoughtfully consider and ask you to as well.

Ticks:

Ticks are "in season" all the time really. Though in the wet winter months they can be quite prolific. Many can carry Lyme Disease, so it is prudent to check your child EVERY TIME they come back from Tender Tracks or when you are outside hiking about. I suggest stripping your child down, putting them in a nice

bath and scrubbing them with a luffa type brush or slightly rough wash cloth. Some of the ticks can be very small like a teeny black dot. There is now so much information about ticks on the web, that I would suggest that you read as much as you can to compare and contrast information and make the best choices for you and your family.

Dehydration:

On warm and hot days children need to drink. If your child doesn't like plain water give them electrolyte water or water with a small bit of juice in it. Not a full bottle of straight juice. Thirst is not a good early sign of dehydration. By the time a child feels thirsty, he or she may already be dehydrated. And thirst can be quenched before the necessary body fluids have been replaced. That's why kids should start drinking before thirst develops and consume additional fluids even after thirst is quenched.

Yellow Jackets:

A person can have a severe reaction to yellow jackets even on their first sting. Though this has never happened at Tender Tracks, being mindful and aware is the beginning of prevention. We do all that we can to be calm and wise around these potent friends. Giving them some of your meat before you eat and waiting until they find it is a very successful way of warding them off from your lunch. Also, avoid swatting them.

Rattle Snakes:

Depending on the year, you will find rattle snakes either under rocks, laying on the side of the pathway or hiding away from people. Tender Tracks has come across about three or four rattle snakes in 21 years. We teach the children where these formidable friends live and how to be respectful and careful.

Local and National Emergencies

The school will close if it seems that it is unsafe to be at a Tender Tracks Day. This would come about if:

1. Local schools have deemed it necessary
2. Local flooding
3. Road closures due to mud slides
4. Severe lighting storms with strict warnings
5. Severe wind
6. Outbreak of a strong communicable disease and all schools closing due to health department warnings

2016/2017 winter brought the worse conditions in the 22 years of Tender Tracks and had to close two times due to it. Prior to this it had only closed twice.

Please note that due to these days being "circumstances beyond our control" no reimbursements are given.

Tender Tracks Child Sick Policy

If a child has had any of the following symptoms in the last 24 hour before a school morning they *must stay at home*.

- A fever of 100 degrees or more
- A runny nose with a thick green or yellow mucus discharge
- A cough with mucus secretion (a wheezy cough can spread a bacterial or viral infection on the droplets) when associated with other symptoms, or when persistent
- Contagious skin ailments such as draining poison oak, impetigo, ringworm, contagious cold sores or fever blisters or lice.
- Recurring diarrhea
- Vomiting, recurring or with a fever, stomach ace, sore throat
- Pink eye or conjunctivitis, if untreated
- Any untreated/contagious disease (chicken pox, measles, etc.)
- Jet lag: Yes, if you have just come back from a trip that has a time difference the day or night before they must stay home until they have recalibrated to this time zone.

They may return after a *full day of wellness*.

Please call if you have any questions about your child's health, or if your child will be absent due to illness, so that the other parents can be alerted. Also, consider your contingency plans for caring for your sick child.

Thank you for your cooperation.

What to bring and not to bring to Tender Tracks

Please leave all toys of any kind that are not straight from the natural world at home. If they wish to bring a stuffed animal, they may bring one that they are able to hold in their hands and leave on the bus.

Play Dates

We strongly encourage you to have play dates, not only with the child(ren) that your child likes to play with at Tender Tracks, but all the children. This develops much greater friendships and fun during that time at school.

Staff Sick Days

Please read your contract to understand what happens on these days. If you would like to help out during one of these such days please let us know.

Flow of the Day

- Meet each other at the park
- Get in the bus, begin to settle into the day, receive your stuffed animal
- Arrive where we are going, get out of the bus, orient/play where we are
- Circle time
- Adventure time
- Lunch time
- Explore, play, continue with what we were doing
- Adventure back to the bus
- Story of the day (a recap of the things we saw, listing them on the bus and/or sharing)
- Drive back and be received by parents

Parent Teacher Phone Conferences

Twice a year we have Parent/Teacher Phone Conferences. The first is in mid-October and the second is at the end of February or beginning of March.

These are very special and important calls where we all get to share with each other how we experience your child doing at Tender Tracks. This is a good time to talk about Kindergarten readiness, how they are doing socially and share the wonderful experiences they are having as well as any other possible challenges.

PLEASE NOTE: You can call any time during the year to ask any questions or share any concerns.

3-Part Parent Class Series

Tender Tracks is now providing Parent Classes to assist you in navigating the wonderful and, at times, challenging world of Parenting. These classes will offer much insight and understanding to the many questions and struggles you as a parent might be experiencing and/or noticing in other families and friends with children. The topics will be relevant to consistent themes that arise in almost all families as well as current themes of your particular class at Tender Tracks.

Dates, times and locations are posted on the school website calendar. For each class one parent must partake. Please post this on your home calendar at the beginning of the year.

Supporting your child's experience at Tender Tracks

Read the journals about the previous week that get published on the Tender Tracks blog every Monday (<https://tendertracks.com/blog/>). This will enable you to get a better sense of their day and aid you in being more understanding and supportive.

Sign up on the Tender Tracks website to receive the Monthly Newsletter with tips and supportive information.

Read the question of the day that is for you, the adult, upon entering the bus to give just a little something more to enhance your own connection to Nature.

Be mindful of how you greet your child at day's end. For example, if they are covered in soot or dirt allow yourself to be supportive and curious about their adventures that they took for the day and that brought them to this lovely way of being covered with the Earth. Ask questions and get curious about what they were doing during the day and how happy you are to see them (just as they are).

If you wish to come to visit Tender Tracks please do email tendertracks@gmail.com with this request. Our request when you come to join us is this: participate with your own level of fun, curiosity and joy. If you have questions about your child or other children, save them for when the children are not around after school or for a call later on. Feel free to bring a notebook and write your questions and queries down. Give your self the opportunity for self reflection, especially if something within you feels uncomfortable.

Tender Tracks thoughts and needs for participating students who utilize TV, iPad, iPod, phone, computer, movie theaters and any screen time

Children who watch and/or utilize the above on a regular basis DO affect, influence and alter the nature focused environment at Tender Tracks. There is a great deal of research and evidence to support the deleterious effects that the many forms of screen time has on children.

Children bring their day to day experiences with them where ever they go. Through play they act out what they experience in life. Play is how they work through and with their life experiences.

Children who have a regular diet of screen time bring this to Tender Tracks. What has been observed over and over and over again is that they have a much harder time being in the present moment with their peers, nature and their feelings. They spend a great deal of time in the fantasy play of worlds that are one dimensional and non reactive. Their social skills are less developed as well as their ability to find comfort in day to day challenges.

Here is a link to an article from Psychology today with regard to research and the down side of having our young ones engage with such devices.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/behind-online-behavior/201604/what-screen-time-can-really-do-kids-brains>

The only part Tender Tracks will remark to unfavorably is the articles decision that one hour a day is fine. From my decades of observation and research this is truly not the case. Therefore, we here at Tender Tracks are asking you to limit your screen time to twice a month and for sure NOT before school time.

We will support you in many ways to get the time you need to get things done and offer many suggestions of how you can give your child other more life fulling activities to do instead of having them in front of the screen, particularly when you wish them to calm down.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Summer Camps

How Camps are Arranged:

Camps are arranged by an organizing parent(s) who gets 8 children together (ages 6 and up) of similar age or group of friends or relatives. Sibling camps can also be created as well as overnights. These camps are a co-creation between parents, staff and children as a way of creating aspects of being a working "village."

If you are interested in organizing a camp please, contact Wendolyn Bird at tendertracks@gmail.com around January 1st. These camps fill quickly.

Financial Investment:

Once the Organizer signs up for a camp slot there is a \$150 non-refundable deposit to hold your space. This deposit however is absorbed into the organizer's tuition if the camp becomes a go.

Within two weeks the full roster and the full tuition must be sent to:

Wendolyn Bird
Tender Tracks
60 Pastori Avenue #35
Fairfax, CA 94930

Roster includes: Parents' names, Childrens' name, Date of Birth, email, phone number and DATE OF CAMP.

Check made out to: Tender Tracks

If this does not take place the camp slot is forfeited.

Please note: Once a participant signs up there are no refunds unless a suitable replacement is found. The "suitable replacement" is to be determined predominantly by the Camp Organizer. The camp must have 8 children to make a camp a go. The Camp Organizer receives \$40 off of their investment.

Day Camp Tuition and Times:

9am to 2pm Monday through Friday
\$355/week

Overnight Camps Tuition and Times:

9 am Wednesday – 5 pm Friday
\$650/camper

Drop off and Pick up: TBD

Camp Re-Cap

- **\$150 due at time of sign up**
- **\$40 off of tuition to the Camp Organizer**
- **Roster and full tuition due two weeks after confirmation of \$150 sent**
- **Please note: All camp forms due no later than May 1.**

The emergency forms, medical release forms and liability waiver can be found on the Required Forms page of our website: <https://tendertracks.com/required-forms/>

A photo is required on all emergency forms. Write the date of the camp at the top of the emergency form.

There are no refunds unless a suitable replacement is found. Replacement is found by the Camp Organizer.

Please note: If forms are not received by May 1 late fees will begin to accrue at \$25/week. If not received within one month of May 1, the camp slot will be forfeited along with the tuition.

(Camps that are filled can sometimes become available, so if you wish to be on a waiting list to organize a camp, please fill out the wait list form and/or email tendertracks@gmail.com)

Please call Director Wendolyn Bird @ 415-419-5274 for further details, if you are interested in this type of camp for your child.

Checks made out to: Tender Tracks

Mailing Address:

Wendolyn Bird
Tender Tracks
60 Pastori Avenue #35
Fairfax, CA 94930