

Our School Community

Our Background- Golden Valley Charter Schools (GVCS) are a network of public charter schools using the three-fold approach of Waldorf Education Methods. We strive to teach the hands, heart, and head of the children we serve and develop a community of families learning and working together. We opened with River School in Orangevale, CA in September 1999 with 45 students. Since our inception we opened a second school in 2015 also located in Orangevale called Orchard School and in 2018 Tahoe School, which is located in Truckee, CA, became a Golden Valley School. As of 2018, we have over 600 students in transitional kindergarten through eighth grades enrolled in our three schools. The first public Waldorf methods school, the Urban Waldorf School, opened in Milwaukee in 1991. Currently there are several public schools in California and throughout the United States using a curriculum inspired by Waldorf Education.

What is Waldorf education?

For nearly a century, Waldorf schools have educated students following the teaching philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. This philosophy features a full integration of the arts in all subjects. There are over 1000 public and private Waldorf schools in North America.

Why Waldorf at Golden Valley?

We are Waldorf-inspired because we believe the Waldorf approach most effectively prepares our students for a lifetime of learning. Waldorf's holistic approach integrates the education of the head, heart, and hands while taking into account the child's developmental maturity across these three capacities at every grade level. To do this we integrate the arts in every part of the day—singing, movement, drawing, painting, story and drama—with our content-rich curriculum as the focus. We incorporate developmentally appropriate social skills and emotional intelligence that builds virtues such as respect and collaboration. We expand the definition of classroom beyond four walls into the natural world.

At Golden Valley, we develop thinking by teaching children to observe objectively with wide awake curiosity. We do this by bringing the child's attention to phenomena that might normally escape notice, encouraging them to keep their questions alive and open rather than rushing to premature judgments. By using storytelling as a teaching tool, we engage the imagination and feeling life of the child in harmony with the thinking mind. When imagination, curiosity, and objective attention are combined, new answers emerge from complex questions.

Waldorf Education was well designed to foster balanced growth, academic excellence, and healthy human development in children, while providing educators with a well-defined curriculum and pedagogy to help them achieve these goals. Over the past century, this approach has withstood the test of time. For these reasons we consider that Waldorf-inspired public education, available to all children regardless of socioeconomic conditions, and delivered through an innovative charter organization is a model of education that truly addresses the educational needs of today's children for tomorrow's world.

What is a Charter School?

A Charter School is an independent public school that is free and open to all students. In 1992, California became the second state to enact Charter School legislation and there are now nearly 1300 charter schools serving over 660,000 students across the state (2018). Charter schools are free to adopt their own teaching methodologies and are held to the same standards of performance as traditional public schools.

Subject to the approval of the sponsoring school district, charter schools are free in their choice of educational philosophy and governance procedures and are exempt from a majority of the requirements of the State Education code. Like other public schools, the Charter School qualifies for state education revenues on the basis

of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) for the year. However, charter schools must also provide for their own sites from this same source of revenue (lease payments, capital improvements, maintenance, etc.). Charter Schools are non-sectarian and non-discriminatory. Parental support and involvement are major components, which contribute to the success of charter schools.

The First Seven Years- From birth the child is learning through imitation. Uprightness, the acquisition of language and the ability to think are gigantic achievements in a period of three or four years. The child gains them through a combination of latent ability, instinct and above all, imitation. The last is the specific talent that characterizes the period up to the age of six or seven; the child mimics everything in the environment uncritically—not only the sounds of speech, the gestures of people (and machines), but the attitudes and values of adults and peers. During this stage the child’s physical body is developing at an incredible rate.

Kindergarten- The kindergarten teacher creates an environment that is worthy of the child’s imitation. The child is offered plenty of opportunities for meaningful imitation and creative play. This supports the child in the central activity of these early years: the development of the physical organism. Through all the kindergarten activities the child is developing judgment and practical intelligence, which will be critical during later life.

In the kindergarten children play at cooking, they dress up and become mothers and fathers, kings and magicians, they sing, paint and color. Through songs and poems, they learn to enjoy language; they learn to play together; hear stories, see puppet shows, bake bread, make soup, model beeswax, build houses out of cloths and wooden play stands.

To become fully engaged in such work is the child’s best preparation for life. It builds powers of concentration, interest, and a life-long love of learning.

The Heart of Childhood—Imagination- When children are ready to leave kindergarten and enter first grade, they are eager to explore the whole world of experience for the second time. Before, they identified with it and imitated it; now, at a more conscious level, they are ready to know it again, by means of the imagination—that extraordinary power of human cognition—which allows us the “see” pictures in our minds.

The Grades- The grades teachers help their students develop their imagination, concentration, ability to focus and flexibility of thinking as well as learn subject material through the use of stories, verses, rhythmic activities, tongue twisters, songs, movement, concentration exercises, and artistic activities during the first two hours of each day called the Main Lesson. One subject is explored in depth for a period of three or four weeks. During the Main Lesson the students listen to stories and write and illustrate their own textbooks (main lesson books). After recess there are practice periods during which basic skills previously introduced are practiced and deepened in simulated life experiences. Specialty Subjects, which include form drawing, painting, beeswax modeling, music, flute or recorder, handwork, games, Spanish, and drama complete the curriculum. Please note that the Spanish classes offered at Golden Valley cannot be counted toward high school college-prep Spanish.

Ideally, class teachers continue with their classes from one year to the next. The class teacher and the children get to know each other very well, and it is this teacher who becomes the school’s closest link with the parents of that class. This experience of class community is both challenging and deeply rewarding to teachers. Having to prepare new subject matter as their students get older from year to year is a guarantee of a fresh start each year. Children begin to see that a human being can strive for a unity of knowledge and experience.

The Home/School Connection- The family unit is the foundation of Waldorf education that the school can only augment. Therefore, the teachers at Golden Valley Charter School feel it is essential that the home support

complement what we are striving to achieve in the classroom. The child's need for rhythm, good nutrition, and sensory protection is of utmost importance. Children who are protected from the sights and sounds of media, fed wholesome food, and provided with daily and weekly rhythms at home will truly benefit from the rich language of the stories and artistic activities they experience at school. Let us look at some of the ways family life can support the educational program at GVCS.

Nutrition- Provide your child with a healthy, well balanced diet, rich in grains, protein, fruits and vegetables and low in processed foods, fats and sugar. Processed foods with dyes and flavor enhancers have been known to create many allergies in children. Often hyperactive or attention deficit disorder children are simply allergic to certain foods they are eating. Nutrition is foremost in helping a child create living energy that develops the body in a positive way.

Technology/Media- Due to the known negative effects that media has on child development and a child's ability to take in the Waldorf methods curriculum, we request that our parents eliminate or limit their children's media/technology use such as computer, radio, video, CD, TV, MP3 players (iPod) and movies. By doing this, the children's minds are left open to take in the rich curriculum they experience each day at school. (Please see our Media Policy for more specific information.)

Rhythm/Rest- Providing your children with daily rhythms, such as regular chores and set meal and bed times within your daily and weekly schedules will enable them to develop self-discipline and the sense of security they will take into their adult lives. In this modern world our lives have become so busy and hectic that we sometimes forget that we all need "down time in order to breathe". Also, children who are well rested come to school able to concentrate and work. Children often need nine to eleven hours of sleep a night, depending on their age.

Volunteering/Community Building- GVCS shall thrive with the active support of its parent community. Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to give 40 service hours per family per school year. We selected this level of commitment based on repeated parent surveys where parents overwhelmingly picked 40 hours as the ideal service commitment. We recognize that this level is lower than the requirement at many schools; however, we believe 40 service hours allows us to welcome busy, working families to GVCS while ensuring opportunities for parents to be significantly involved in their children's school. In requesting parents/guardians to volunteer, GVCS intention is to focus on the joy of service. Research has demonstrated that parent involvement improves student learning. Parent involvement at GVCS also shows students that their parents care about their school and creates a community atmosphere.

Fundraising/Golden Valley Educational Foundation- For Orchard and River school families- The Golden Valley Educational Foundation (GVEF) has been established to financially support our school. GVEF is a 501(c)3 nonprofit created to raise money for Golden Valley Charter Schools. Our mission is to nourish and strengthen the curriculum inspired by Waldorf education in Golden Valley Charter Schools by raising funds that directly supplement the GVCS budget. GVEF grants money collected directly to GVCS and the Board of Trustees determines how the money is allocated. GVEF's fundraising supports specialty programs, operating costs, and professional development. It also provides valuable quality items for our classrooms such as instruments, main lesson books, and practical art supplies. In order to continue to provide a rich program inspired by Waldorf Education to our students, GVEF sponsors fundraising events, write grants to private educational foundations and requests that families donate \$110 per month per child to supplement Golden Valley Charter School's operating budget. Please contact gvef@gvcharter.org to get involved and to get for more information.

In conclusion, this is a very short summary of each of these topics. We encourage you to find out more about each of them and Waldorf Education in general. As a parent of a GVCS student you will have many opportunities to learn and share experiences; through class meetings, parent/teacher conferences, Parent Enrichment Lectures,

conversations with fellow parents at community events, and at classes offered within the greater community. In the meantime, please visit our website at www.goldenvalleycharter.org.

-Curriculum outline by grade-

1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
Language Arts *writing *reading *fairy Tales Mathematics *add. /subtraction *multiplication /div. Form Drawing Spanish Beeswax modeling Knitting Painting Flutes Games Drama	Language Arts *writing *reading *legends *fables *grammar Mathematics *add. /subtraction *multiplication /div. Form Drawing Spanish Beeswax modeling Knitting Painting Games Drama	Language Arts *composition *reading *legends *letter writing *Hebrew legends *Grammar Mathematics *memorize multi facts *measurement *money *long multi. *division w/remainder Social Studies *cooking *building *clothing Spanish Gardening Crocheting Recorder Painting Games Drama	Language Arts *grammar *drama *Norse myths *report writing *business letter *narrative writing Mathematics *long division *multiplication *estimation *fractions Social Studies *CA history & geography Science *Zoology Spanish Painting Needlework Recorder Games Drama	Language Arts *narrative writing *report writing *grammar *Greek Mythology Mathematics *decimals *Geometry *prime numbers Social Studies *Ancient Civilizations *Greek History *US Geography Science *Botany Spanish Painting Handwork Recorder Games Drama	Language Arts *essay writing *out-lining *creative writing *narrative writing *grammar *Roman mythology Mathematics *ratio *business math *Geometry Social Studies *Roman History *Medieval History *World Geography Science *Astronomy *Geology *Physics Spanish Painting Drawing Handwork Recorder Games Drama	Language Arts *biography *short stories *creative writing Mathematics *Algebra *Geometry Social Studies *US & Modern History *World Geography *Economics Science *Physics *Mechanics *Physiology Spanish Sewing Painting Drawing Recorder Choral Singing Gardening Games Drama	

*The above table is not exact and can vary and is only intended to give the reader a rough idea of waldorf curriculum by grade level.