

# School Life and Communication in the Adult Community

“What is more splendid than gold? “Light.” “What is more refreshing than light?” “Conversation.”  
Goethe, *The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily*

## Sections

1. Philosophy of Adult Conduct and Communication
2. Code of Conduct – Principles, Guidelines and Consequences
3. How Parents Can Communicate with the School
4. Conflict Resolution
5. How the School Communicates with Parents
6. Electronic Communications

## 1. PWS Philosophy of Adult Conduct and Communication

At PWS our vision for our community of students, faculty, staff, parents, neighbors, and friends is that we will find that each “single soul reflects the total community, and the community itself is reflected in the single soul” (Rudolf Steiner). As adults in this community, we are obliged to provide models worthy of imitation for the children. If we are to foster respect, we must model respect in our interactions with each other. Our school is committed to positive adult communication, based on mutual respect. We are committed to an atmosphere where different perspectives are heard and valued, and confidentiality is respected.

One of the 12 senses described by Rudolf Steiner is the sense of ego—meaning a sense not of oneself only, but a cultivation of sensitivity to others. Though it is natural for questions and concerns to arise within any community, sensitivity and respect allow such concerns to be communicated in a productive and constructive manner. An important starting point is recognizing that the first priority is serving the best interests of the students. All respectful adult interactions, large and small, lead to building a healthy environment for student learning. All respectful adult communication serves to model appropriate, constructive and adult behavior.

## 2. Code of Conduct

At Pasadena Waldorf School we are dedicated to the ideal that education will thrive in a social environment where all members of the school community actively work to respect and support each other’s well being. As adults in this community, we are obliged to provide models worthy of imitation for the children. If we are to foster respect, we must model respect in our interactions with each other.

## Principles

- **We demonstrate respect**, in both what we say, and how we say it.
- **We focus on issues, not individuals**. We assume that others are acting out of their best intentions.
- **We keep an open mind**. We are positive and flexible. We ask questions first.
- **We respect the confidentiality** of information imparted in confidence, including that shared in group meetings. We honor the need of others to do the same.

## Guidelines

- When a question or issue arises concerning another person (a class teacher, a subject teacher, a staff member, or another parent), we take it up appropriately and, as soon as possible, **we have a face-to-face conversation with that person. Asking a clarifying question is often all that is needed to solve an issue**. We demonstrate respect by **speaking to people directly**, rather than taking the issue to others when the one with whom we have an issue is not present.
- We **respect others' time and priorities** by arranging for an appropriate time and place for the conversation. (Teachers will respond to a meeting request within one day.)
- We **strive not to take things personally**. We listen with an open heart and mind.
- We **use email and texting thoughtfully**, keeping in mind the four Principles above. (See the Section V.4 Electronic Communications below for guidelines for email and texting.)
- We **familiarize ourselves with these communication principles and guidelines** and with the *PWS Conflict Resolution Process*, and encourage others to use them.
- We **do not condone or tolerate verbal, physical or sexual harassment**. Our guidelines regarding bullying, abuse and other forms of harassment are detailed in the most recent version of the Parent Handbook.

## Why Face-to-Face Conversations?

Face-to-face conversations may be difficult, but they help lead us away from one-sided views and toward mutual understanding and informed decisions. When we adults “walk the talk,” we are role models for the children and each other, and we strengthen our entire community.

For support in face-to-face conversations, we may invite a mutually agreeable **Third Person** to participate in the conversation. Such a neutral Third Person can help us form our thoughts, offer support, and facilitate the conversation. A Third Person can help both parties achieve clarity in the conversation and also help us hold to our agreements.

A Third Person does not speak for either party in the conversation -- that is each individual's responsibility -- nor does the Third Person advocate for one point of view or the other.

## Consequences

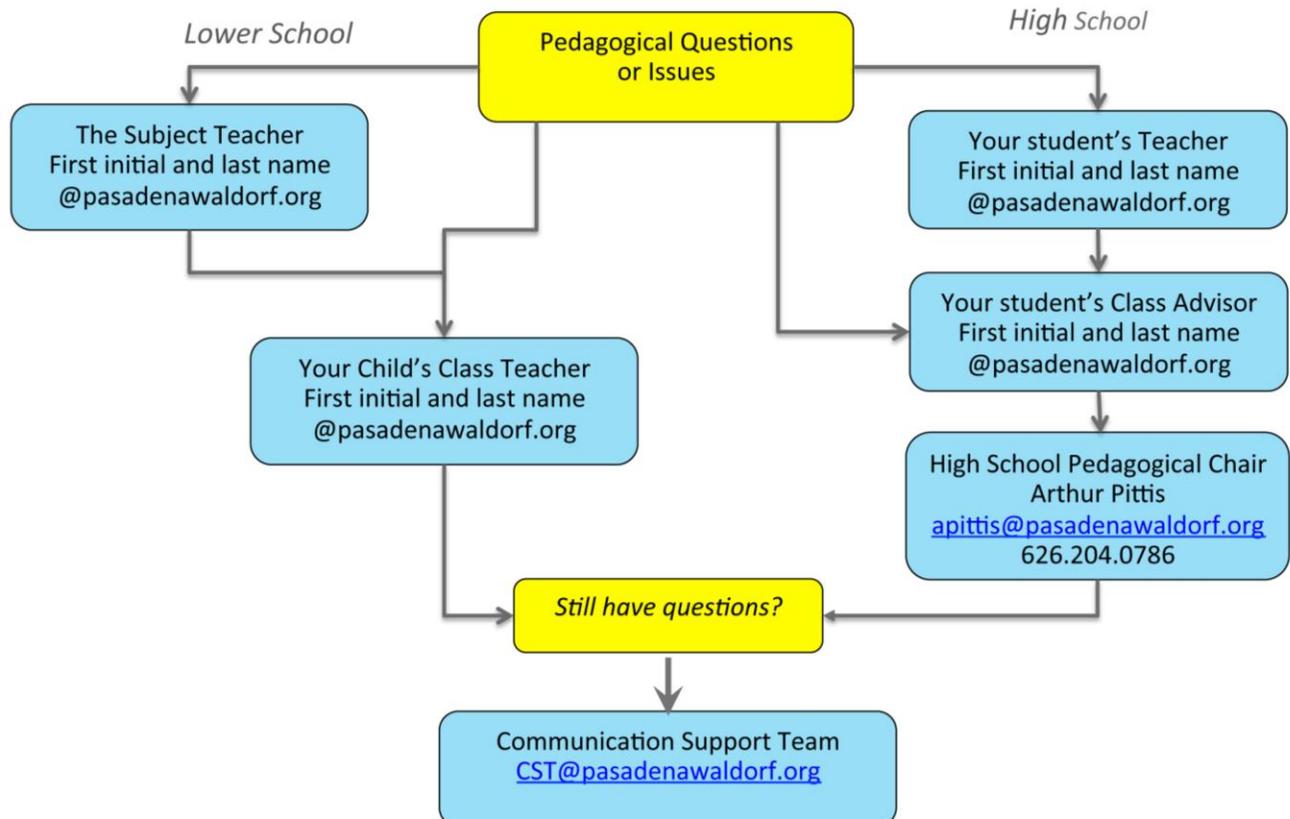
Initial violations of the school's Code of Conduct, as reported to the PWS Leadership Circle (consisting of Board of Trustees Leadership Group, College of Teachers Leadership Group, Pedagogical Administrator, and Business Administrator), will be documented, and may result in a meeting with one or more member of the Leadership Circle.

Egregious or repeated violations of the school's Code of Conduct, as determined by the PWS Leadership Circle, will be documented and may result in one or more of the following:

- Meeting with members of school leadership
- Limits on access to the school campus, to faculty or staff members, to school events and/ or volunteer opportunities.
- Dismissal

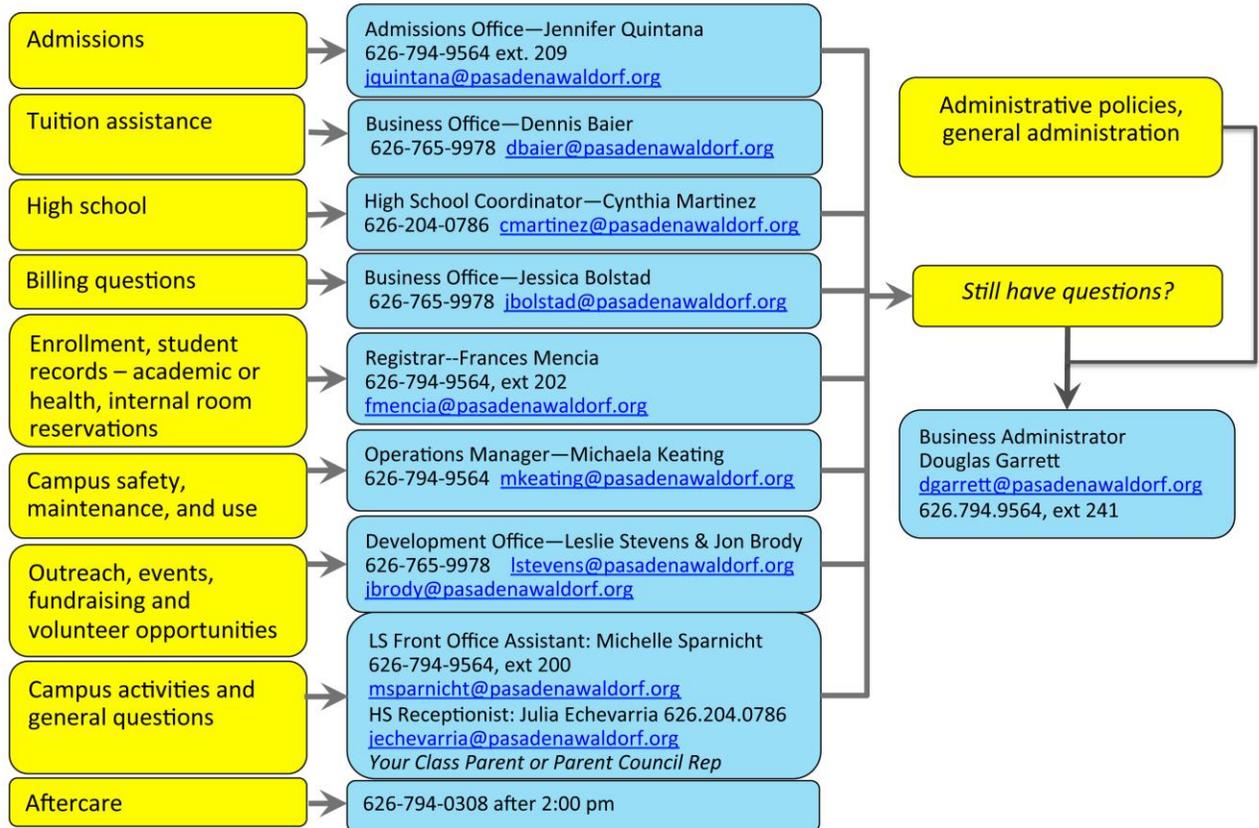
## 3. How Parents Can Communicate with the School

As a Parent, Whom Do I Contact?  
*Pedagogical Questions*



## As a Parent, Whom Do I Contact?

### Administrative Questions



Pasadena Waldorf School

March 2, 2016

\*The contact information for the current holders of these positions is posted on the PWS website and in the current Parent Handbook. All teachers have [pasadenawaldorf.org](http://pasadenawaldorf.org) email addresses to facilitate contact

**If a question or concern remains, or is not finding resolution,** contact the Pedagogical Administrator. In the absence of a Pedagogical Administrator, please contact the Communication Support Team (see Level 3 in the conflict resolution section)

If you are unsure where to take your question, your Parent Council Representative will be able to help guide you to the best source of information. The Parent Council may also help channel general issues or those that involve more than one class.

## 4. Conflict Resolution

**Level 1:** Speak to the Person Directly (see Guidelines, above)

**Level 2:** Contact Your Class Teacher or High School Pedagogical Chair

**Level 3:** Contact the Pedagogical Administrator or the  
Communication Support Team

**Level 4:** Contact the PWS Leadership Circle

*These steps are described in more detail below:*

### What Do We Mean by Resolution?

Conflict is a normal and natural occurrence among people working together toward shared goals. When we engage in moving a conflict toward resolution, we model healthy human relationships for our students and for each other. Resolution can take a variety of forms, including:

- coming to a mutual understanding
- recognizing of the need for further work
- agreeing to disagree, and agreeing, nonetheless, to treat each other with respect.

A resolution may be documented with a formal agreement.

PWS has a four-level process to support parent communication. **At any level, inviting a mutually agreed upon Third Person as listener or facilitator** into a conversation is always an option (see page 2, “Why Face to Face Conversations”). The Third Person can be anyone within or without the PWS community. With honest, direct communication, most conflicts can be resolved.

For conflicts relating to concerns involving **our child, our child’s teacher(s), the educational program, and relationships among parents in our classes**, the process has the following individual steps, any of which may resolve the conflict:

**Level 1: Speak to the Person Directly**, whether a parent, teacher, or staff member, following the Guidelines in Section V.2, Code of Conduct. Direct communication, with respect and sensitivity, is the groundwork for all conflict resolution.

Sometimes, before we have the face-to-face conversation to resolve an issue, we may want to process that concern with a friend. In that case, we select a mutually agreeable time and place for that meeting and ask our friend to keep the conversation confidential. Afterward, we follow through by having the face-to-face conversation with the appropriate person to address our concern.

If a friend approaches us with a concern, we encourage our friend to pursue a face-to-face conversation to address the concern, and we follow up with our friend later.

## **Level 2: Contact Our Class Teacher or High School Pedagogical Chair.**

If a direct conversation has not yielded a satisfactory resolution to the conflict, the next step is a conversation with the Class Teacher (Lower School) or with the High School Pedagogical Chair. (If the conflict is with our Class Teacher, then Levels 1 and 2 become one.)

The Class Teacher (Lower School) or Pedagogical Chair (High School) has a larger perspective that can often be helpful. He or she may be able to facilitate a resolution to the conflict. Also, sharing your concerns can also help create a fuller picture for the Class Teacher or Pedagogical Chair.

If necessary, invite a mutually agreeable Third Person to the conversation. It may be helpful to document the conversation for future reference.

If, after taking this action, we feel the conflict remains unresolved, we proceed to Level 3.

## **Level 3: Contact the Pedagogical Administrator; in the absence of a Pedagogical Administrator, contact the Communication Support Team.**

If Level 2 has not brought satisfactory resolution, the next step is to contact the Pedagogical Administrator for assistance. If the position of Pedagogical Administrator is vacant, we should contact the **Communication Support Team** (CST) at [CST@pasadenawaldorf.org](mailto:CST@pasadenawaldorf.org) for assistance.

The Pedagogical Administrator or CST will acknowledge the request for assistance within one working day by phone, email or in writing, and will work with all parties, bringing them together as needed, to help resolve the issue. We may invite a mutually agreed upon Third Person to participate in any meeting with the Pedagogical Administrator or CST.

### **The Communication Support Team**

The Communication Support Team is an appointed body composed of up to five current faculty members, who are appointed by the College of Teachers with input from the Board Leadership Group. These individuals are appointed because they are skilled at listening and have demonstrated successful results in addressing parent concerns. Two or three members of the CST will participate in any given meeting; any CST member involved in the specific conflict will recuse him/herself from participating.

The Pedagogical Administrator or CST will work with all parties involved, bring them together as needed, and assist in resolving the issue. A written agreement will be created when possible and appropriate.

The Pedagogical Administrator or CST will document, in writing, any resolution or recommendation that includes an action plan. All inquiries to the Level 3 process will be logged and communicated to the PWS Leadership Circle (Board Leadership Group, College Leadership Group and the Pedagogical and Business Administrators), which meets on a weekly basis. The Leadership Circle will also monitor the conflict resolution process to ensure that progress is timely.

#### **Level 4: Contact the PWS Leadership Circle.**

Should still further action be needed, the next step available for conflict resolution is to arrange a meeting with the PWS Leadership Circle (which consists of the Board of Trustees Leadership Group, the College of Teachers Leadership Group, the Pedagogical Administrator, and the Business Administrator). This group meets weekly to support the successful operations of PWS.

To meet with the Leadership Circle, contact the Business Administrator, who may request that you describe in writing the nature of the conflict and the steps taken thus far. The Business Administrator will acknowledge the request by written notice within two working days and will coordinate a time to meet with the Leadership Circle.

The Leadership Circle will review the conflict, work with all parties involved, bring them together as needed, and assist in bringing the issue to resolution. The Leadership Circle will keep a record and provide a written reply to all parties informing them of their conclusions regarding the matter.

#### **Administrative Concerns**

For concerns involving administrative staff members, please contact the Business Administrator.

If the issue is with the Business Administrator, contact the Chair of the Board at [BoardChair@pasadenawaldorf.org](mailto:BoardChair@pasadenawaldorf.org). If the issue is with the Pedagogical Administrator, contact the Chair of the College of Teachers at [CollegeChair@pasadenawaldorf.org](mailto:CollegeChair@pasadenawaldorf.org).

## **5. How PWS Communicates with Parents**

**Parent Meetings** are held at school four to six times per school year for early childhood, lower and high school classes. In these forums we discuss child development, the curriculum, upcoming class events, and issues which relate to the class as a whole. We are asked to please save personal issues for private conversations. Class Teachers host the meetings in the early childhood classes and lower school, while the high school meetings are hosted by the Class Advisor.

**Class Newsletters and Updates:** Early childhood and lower school teachers issue newsletters to keep parents abreast of class activities.

**Parent/Teacher Conferences** are arranged by teachers. Class Teachers or high school administration will let parents know how to sign up for the available conference slots.

**Online Resources:** The PWS website, Parent Portal, School Calendar, Roster and online Parent Handbook are maintained as great sources of information about PWS and the school year, classes, people and events. Parents are urged to get to know these tools and resources and use them. Make sure you know who your Parent Council Rep is, and feel free to contact him or her with any questions.

**Parent Education events** are scheduled through the year. Check “This Week at PWS” newsletters for dates and times.

**Student Reports:** In early summer, parents of students in grades 1-12 and kindergarteners moving onto first grade will receive year-end student reports. These reports are written by the child’s teachers and contain detailed information on the curriculum and the child’s progress over the year. Parents of Middle School students receive written student reports at mid-year as well as at year end. High School reports are issued quarterly. High school student reports are sent to parents quarterly.

**Very important documents** will be sent via first class mail to parents’ homes.

**Newsletters:** *This Week at PWS* contains events for the upcoming week (class meetings, plays, athletic events, etc.) and classified listings, and is published each week by the Development & Communications office and distributed via email on Sunday evening. The *PWS Reader* is published several times throughout the year and contains more in-depth articles about PWS activities and events or aspects of Waldorf education. As a community service, parents and staff are welcome to advertise in the classified section of *This Week at PWS* free of charge. Classified ads typically concern listings for sale, rentals, housing wanted and lost and found notices. Send classified submissions, which are subject to editing, availability of space, and school administration approval, to Registrar@pasadenawaldorf.org.

**Parent cubbies** for families in Early Childhood and Grades 1-8 are located in the front of the Wishing Well in the parking lot area on the Mariposa campus. Checking cubbies regularly and reading the contents keeps this an effective communication channel. Car-pooling families are encouraged to make arrangements with the designated driver to pick up their cubby communications. Cubbies are arranged in approximate alphabetical order. Parent cubbies are for school and parent use and not for commercial purposes. Please obtain permission from the Business Administrator before placing flyers or other items in the parent cubbies en masse. Cubbies are not secured, so valuables should never be left in them. High School families do not have parent cubbies and any flyers, letters, etc. will be sent home with the student or mailed.

**Bulletin Boards:** All notices, flyers, or posters affixed to any school message board must be pre-approved by the school administration. Please submit message board items to the school receptionist.

## **6. Electronic Communications**

### **Electronic Communications - Email, Text and Social Media**

Electronic communication has become an essential part of adult life. It is a tool that can be helpful in transmitting simple or large amounts of information, coordinating activities, and expediting plans and processes. However, email lacks the key visual cues, nuances and inflection of direct communication, which can cause misunderstandings; thus, problem-solving can be better achieved face-to-face. Electronic communications present unique opportunities and challenges, some of which have the potential to create division within our community. The following guidelines will aid us in our work together as a community.

**Tone of communication:** People sometimes write something they might not feel comfortable saying in person. It is important that we take time to reflect on the content and tone of emails *before they are sent*, and that we never say something in an email that we would not say in person. This is particularly important when emotions are high; it is all too easy to hit “Reply”, or worse still, “Reply all,” and fire off an immediate response to something another person has written. Often, our immediate response doesn't adequately reflect the complexities of the situation and the delicacy of feelings that may have arisen. If a particular piece of writing evokes a powerful emotional response, it can be helpful to pause and reflect on where that reaction comes from -- is the response particularly influenced by our own thoughts, assumptions, previous experiences, feelings or beliefs, over and above what the other person has actually written?

**Confidentiality:** A request for confidentiality, even in electronic communication, must be honored absolutely, unless there is threat of physical harm, in which case you should file a police report with local law enforcement. If the threat is from a member of the PWS community, report the incident immediately to the Business Administrator.

In discussion groups, communication within the specified discussion groups should remain within those groups and confidential, unless the group agrees to approve the sharing of such communication with other individuals. Only persons authorized to represent any discussion group to another group should engage in communication between those groups. In this spirit of confidentiality, it is best to carefully consider the intentions of the sender as well as the possible implications prior to forwarding email or text messages to any other recipients.

**Prohibited content:** Electronic communication is not to be used for the creation or distribution of any offensive or disruptive messages, including messages containing offensive comments about race, gender, age, sexual orientation, pornography, religious or political beliefs, national origin, or disability. People who receive any emails with this content should report the matter to the Business Administrator.

## Electronic Communication Guidelines

- **Write a draft first.** Save it and read it again the next day before sending.
- **Use "I" statements.** "You" statements are often perceived as an attack. Making the same statement from the "I" perspective can avoid this perception.
- **Express needs and wants rather than judgments or critiques;** we always need solutions to our challenges. It is also helpful to try to imagine what the other person's needs and wants are as well.
- **Respond completely to all questions.** If we do not answer all the questions in the original email, we will receive further e-mails regarding the unanswered questions, which can waste time and cause considerable frustration.
- **Do not write in CAPITALS.** Writing in capitals can be interpreted as shouting. This can be highly annoying and might trigger an unwanted response in the form of overly emotional e-mail or unspoken resentment or misunderstanding.
- **Do not overuse "Reply to All".** We should only use "Reply to All" if it is critical that our message is seen by every person who received the original message.

- **Speak for ourselves, not for others.** It is not appropriate to speak for or refer to others who have not spoken on their own behalf. Generalizations and assumptions can create a false impression.
- **Use cc: field sparingly.** Using the cc: field can be confusing since the recipients might not know who is supposed to act on the message. We must not “cc” others as a way to expose or shame. In general, we try not to use the cc: field unless the recipient in the cc: field knows why he or she is receiving a copy of the message.
- **Re-read the entire email before sending it.** Reading email through the eyes of the recipient will help us create more effective messages and avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate comments. The importance of this cannot be overstated.

### **Use Proper Netiquette at All Times**

“Netiquette” means bringing conscious etiquette and manners to behavior in electronic communications. Email communications and postings on the School’s social media cannot be held as private communication or even necessarily held within the PWS community. Social media sites are especially vulnerable to wider dissemination. In internet communication, as with any other communication, respectful and polite language is expected. Be mindful that electronic communication outlets are not appropriate for wider discussions of personal matters or personal concerns. Also, be aware that referencing the names of others in these communications must be done with care and respect for the privacy of students and parents, and only with their explicit consent.

*This document was created by the Communication Transformation Team in cooperation with the Governance Transformation Mandate Group, with input from PWS parents, teachers, and staff members, as well as research based on the work of several other Waldorf schools in North America.*

*Approved:*

*Board of Trustees, January 25, 2016*

*College of Teachers, January 20, 2016*