



# BUDDY FAMILY GUIDE

BUDDY FAMILIES  
INTEGRATE NEW  
FAMILIES INTO OUR  
SWS COMMUNITY



## **Role of Buddy Families**

Buddy Families serve in two main capacities: as welcoming partners, and as communicators to a family that is new to the school. The Buddy Family reaches out to the new family and provides them with support, social opportunities, resources, answers when possible, and familiar faces to help foster a living connection to the school.

Additionally, the Buddy Family assists new families in understanding the significance and content of various events, presentations and festivals throughout the year.

## **Top Four Reasons to Become a Buddy Family**

1. Meet and develop relationships with new families.
2. Provide new families with another resource to find information, support, and a sense of belonging in our community.
3. Enjoy social and informational events that will assist the new family in assimilating into the SWS community.
4. Contribute to the enhancement of a strong school community.

## **Buddy Family Selection and Match Up**

Parents who are interested in participating in the Buddy Family Program may sign up at Recommitment Days which take place in February. The Lead of the New Parent Outreach Team will call all parents who have signed up to orient them to the program. In the spring, each Buddy Family will be contacted for a renewed commitment to the program.

Once new families have been enrolled in the school, the New Parent Outreach Team will work with the Admissions Director to pair each new family with a Buddy Family, with attention paid to commonalities such as gender and age of children.

## What Do I Have To Do?

- Know where to find resources and answers to questions that your new Buddy Family may have. Keep a copy of the school's Parent Handbook and list of phone numbers for reference.
- Contact your New Family and introduce yourself. Provide them with your contact information. Let them know in what capacity you are available to support them. You may opt to meet socially, answer questions, direct them to resources, or accompany them at events or festivals.
- Keep your New Buddy Family informed of upcoming events at the school that you think would interest them.
- Attend, plan and/or host Buddy Family social events with the help of the New Parent Outreach Team. These may include Waldorf Education classes, casual potluck gatherings, etc.
- Assist the New Parent Outreach Team and SWS administration in understanding the needs of new families in terms of policies, communication of information, and other school practices.

## What Skills Are Desirable?

- **Ability to Socialize Comfortably and Provide Support** Buddy Families need to be able to call and meet with new families and create a feeling of welcome and warmth. It is important to be friendly and relate well to others so that new families feel comfortable in approaching you. It will be helpful if the Buddy Family is comfortable initiating social meetings with the new family.
- **General Knowledge of School Policies, New Family Needs, and Waldorf Education** Buddy families will be supplied with a comprehensive Parent Handbook, and resources including a list of who to call with specific types of questions not addressed therein. The Buddy Family parent should be aware of the information in the Parent Handbook, understand the governance of the school, and be willing to convey this information in a clear and positive manner. They should be able

to direct new families to resources or persons who can answer questions that are outside their scope. An annual meeting will be held to help clarify the scope of the Buddy Family system. It is not necessary for the Buddy Family to be experts on any of the above, so long as they understand where to find the needed information either directly from the school, or from a reliable source.

- **Experience and Commitment to the Enhancement of a Strong SWS Community**

It is helpful if the Buddy Family has been at school for at least one year. A positive attitude and a commitment to building a healthy parent social community is highly desirable for this task.

## How Much Time Does it Take?

The time commitment varies according to the needs of new families. As a New Buddy Family, you will be asked to:

- Contact your Buddy Family in the Summer at least once in order to introduce yourself and explain how you will be available for the remainder of the year.
- Attend at least one late spring Buddy System Briefing to get your questions answered about the position and meet with other Buddy Families in the school.
- Attend or host social or informational gatherings for Buddy Families as your schedule permits, throughout the year.
- Communicate with your Buddy Family to inform them of upcoming events, answer their questions, attend events with them and/or provide them with resources, or just check in periodically if that is all that they require.
- Communicate with the New Parent Outreach Team to keep them abreast of how things are going and additional resources that would be helpful.

### **How Much Do I Need to Know About Waldorf Education?**

You do not need to be particularly familiar with Waldorf Education to be a great Buddy Family. You should thoroughly familiarize yourself with the Parent Handbook, and keep informed about the school's events through the school's newsletter and website. This will provide you with the knowledge base to support you in your role. The most important factor is for you to know where to find the information that is needed, not necessarily to provide answers yourself.

### **How Does the Buddy Family Parent Relate to the Class Parents?**

The Class Parent serves two roles: supporting the class teacher through communication with the class and welcoming new families in their class. In this respect, the Buddy Family is a support for the class parent in that they are a further branch of the New Parent Outreach Team and can provide insight about this family's needs and potential interests.