



# **AWAKENING SEED SCHOOL**

## **INTERN/SUB/VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

### **2009-2010**

6630 S. 40th Street  
Phoenix, Arizona 85042  
602.454.2606 • 602.454.2773 FAX  
[www.awakeningseedschool.org](http://www.awakeningseedschool.org)



# Working Together

We shape our self  
to fit this world

and by the world  
are shaped again.

The visible  
and the invisible

working together  
in common cause,

to produce  
the miraculous.

I am thinking of the way  
the intangible air

passed at speed  
round a shaped wing

easily holds our weight.

So may we, in this life  
trust

to those elements  
we have yet to see

or imagine,  
and look for the true

shape of our own self,  
by forming it well

to the great  
intangibles about us.

*--David Whyte*

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# THE SEED PHILOSOPHY AND VISION

Throughout history, people from all walks of life have shared a vision of an age in which all beings will live together in peace. Those who hold this vision are committed to working for the benefit of all others until each one has attained an awareness of the unity of life. Awakening Seed is a part of this worldwide vision of peace and was founded on these basic principles:

- All life forms are interconnected. When we damage one portion of the web of life, we damage the entire system. Helping even the smallest creature contributes to the harmony of the whole planet.
- Life can be viewed as a series of cycles or patterns. By studying smaller cycles such as the breath in the human body or life cycles of insects and spiders, the universals of life are more easily understood.
- Each person is more than a physical being. Our intellect and spiritual nature need cultivation as well, in order to become a balanced person.
- We all need love and support in our efforts to learn and grow.
- Suffering can be eliminated through loving kindness and compassion. This attitude is cultivated most effectively at an early age.
- World peace is possible.

With these principles in mind, Awakening Seed was conceived in 1977 in order to provide a school environment that furthers this vision. More specifically, the Seed was established to provide a setting where children and families of diverse backgrounds can come together to learn and grow, where developing humanitarians, artists, and creative thinkers is equally important to learning about the basic academic subjects. Furthermore, the Seed's intention is to promote a type of education that will raise the awareness of the needs of our planet and its inhabitants, and learn how each of us can be a more mindful planetary citizen and steward.

At the Seed we strive to provide a safe environment with a nurturing, community atmosphere. We attempt to model respect and expect that children will be respectful to their peers and the adults in their lives. Educationally, we believe that children should be well rounded, develop a disposition to love learning when they are young, and enjoy coming to school. We use an emergent curriculum model, which means that the interests, passions, and daily lives of both children and teachers frequently drive classroom content. Academic subjects are often integrated into larger projects, which allows students to apply basic skills in meaningful ways. We make a strong effort to adhere to the Arizona State Standards, as well as guidelines provided by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

If you have more specific questions about the Seed philosophy or curriculum, please consult the Director, Assistant Director, or any experienced staff member. School communications, such as newsletters, the Seed website ([www.awakeningseedschool.org](http://www.awakeningseedschool.org)) and information provided by the classroom teachers and other staff members should help answer any questions you have. A reading list of relevant materials is available upon request.

# WHAT MAKES THE SEED UNIQUE?

- Children are respected for their strengths, supported in their efforts to become well-balanced individuals, and encouraged to become intelligent, divergent thinkers. An emphasis is placed on what a child does well, building on that to develop areas of challenge.
- Students are treated with respect and are given support and guidance as they develop their social skills. Social/emotional development is considered as essential as learning to read and write.
- The Awakening Seed curriculum is designed to evolve from and with the children and staff. Children are highly motivated, self-directed learners because they are allowed to have a voice in determining their learning experiences.
- The rich multicultural learning environment allows students to appreciate both the similarities and differences we share as human beings. Many school activities include all ages and foster a spirit of cooperation, creating a sense of family and community.
- Class sizes are kept small, thus providing the maximum amount of attention for each child. Adaptations are made to meet individual needs and parents are highly involved, giving extra support to both students and staff.
- The outdoor environment plays a significant role in a child's Seed education. Gardening, tending personal outdoor spaces, spending time in the schoolyard habitat (including a pond), and learning about ecological issues are built into the Seed curriculum.
- Creativity and artistic expression are a high priority at the Seed. Both process and product are honored, giving children yet another means of self-expression.
- Seed students love to come to school because they are interested in what is offered and it's a happy place in which to grow.

# PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

## Dress Code

While Awakening Seed does not have a specific dress code for the staff and students/interns, you are expected to wear clothes that are clean, neat and in good repair. Casual, comfortable clothing is certainly appropriate, even necessary, for the work we do. At the same time, it is important to remember that we are professional educators. Our appearance should reflect this. Undergarments must be covered at all times, and **no low cut** tank tops, v-necks, or spaghetti strap tops should be worn. Tank top straps must be a minimum of three inches wide. Please make sure that all tops are long enough and pants/shorts/skirts are high enough to cover the midsection of your body. Miniskirts are generally not appropriate due to the time we spend on the floor.

Male staff members who do not have a beard, mustache, etc. are expected to come to school clean shaven each day.

## Professionalism

While on the Awakening Seed School campus, it is important that all students and interns demonstrate professionalism. All students are expected to be courteous of parents and children coming and going from the building, as well as in the hallway. Please be mindful of conversations with content that might be inappropriate for children and/or their parents to hear in a school setting (e.g. social life details, going out to bars, foul language, etc.). Furthermore, please make sure your cars are free of bumper stickers, painted messages, decals, etc. that might be inappropriate for children and parents to see.

## Smoking

Awakening Seed School is a smoke-free environment.

## Personal Phone Calls (School Phone)

Please keep personal phone calls to a minimum. They must not interfere with your work. Emergency calls regarding illness or injury to family members, changed family plans, or calls for similar reasons may be made at any time. Incoming urgent calls will be directed to you.

## Cell Phone Use

Cell phones must be turned off and not be used during class time or during after school duty. **This includes use of cell phones for text messaging.** Mornings before and after playground duty, during lunch breaks, and after school (unless you are working after school) are appropriate times to use cell phones. Please have anyone call you at school through the office (602) 454-2606 in the event of an emergency so that a substitute can be provided during your phone conversation. **The only exception to this policy is for staff members who have older children not attending the school, who might need to contact their parent for emergencies, rides, coordination of plans, etc. In this case, they may call the staff member/parent directly.**

## Personal E-mail/Computer Time (policy clarified)

Staff members are encouraged to use school technology for anything related to classroom

work, including e-mail, Internet searches, and technology projects. Any personal use of computers (e.g. checking your personal e-mail, attending to matters not related to your classroom work, such as university course work, personal social events, or other life activities) should be limited to non-duty times, personal lunch time, and after school (if not on duty).

**If you do not have a computer at home and/or you are unable to open pdf documents or other attachments, please be sure to check your email at school each day.**

### **Copy Machine Use**

If you wish to use an Awakening Seed School copier for personal use, you are to reimburse Awakening Seed School at the rate of 10 cents per copy. **This includes printing non-school related documents from the Internet as well as copies for university courses being taught or taken.** We operate on the honor system with this, so please be respectful of the school's financial situation and be accountable for any non-school copies you make.

### **Staff and Student/Intern Food and Drink Policy**

Role modeling our wholesome food and drink policy is an important aspect of our work with children. The following policy was drafted and accepted by staff members to which everyone is expected to adhere:

While in the presence of students and parents, Awakening Seed staff members, volunteers, and students/interns are required to follow the school policy for food and drink consumption. Any non-alcoholic beverage may be consumed during school hours, provided it is in a non-transparent cup. Drinks should not be transferred into alternative cups while students are present. Empty containers need to be disposed of in the kitchen. Water, juice, tea, and coffee may be openly consumed in front of students and parents. Coffee drinks topped with whipped cream and syrups may not be consumed in front of students, unless they are transferred into a nontransparent cup.

## **PARKING LOT AND AUTO SAFETY**

### **Auto Safety**

Please exercise caution when entering or leaving the parking lot. **All ASU students must park as far away from the building as possible, either on the south end of the parking lot or on Vineyard Street. Your arrival time is one of our busiest times of the day for picking up children, and we all need to be extra vigilant about parking lot safety.** Please drive slowly, park only in designated parking spaces, and be sure to watch for children crossing the parking lot, regardless of age. The area in front of the building along the yellow curb is a designated drop-off area for older students only. At no time should a car be left unattended along the yellow curb. Please help us keep our students safe by not parking in this area.

Occasionally we have had cars broken into in the parking lot, mostly in the afternoons. In each instance there was a purse, backpack, money, cell phone, or stereo visible from the exterior of the car. Please be sure to bring these items into the building with you or place them somewhere they are hidden from view. If you see an unattended child in a car, please report this to the front desk or an administrator and we will follow up with the parent.

# DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE

The Seed staff has worked diligently to develop a guidance and discipline policy that is based on learning rather than punishment, ensures the safest possible environment, gives children a consistent and common language for solving problems, and supports students in their development as social beings. Considerable efforts have been made to minimize unsafe behaviors on the playground, eliminate unkind or inappropriate language, and diminish the number of disruptions in classrooms.

Consistent with our emergent curriculum model, we are always in the process of developing and adapting our guidance and discipline policy to meet the needs of the children in attendance at the Seed and the world in which we live. The following policy is our current working plan for maintaining a safe and peaceful school environment.

## **The Seed Guidance And Discipline Policy**

### **Safety**

Safety is our first priority. We are committed to maintaining a school environment that is physically and emotionally safe for all children. All children deserve to be treated with respect. They function and learn optimally when they feel secure. Safety is cultivated through our warm, accepting school climate, which fosters connection and contribution. Children are expected to contribute in meaningful ways to the community and to help maintain a safe environment. They are taught pro-social strategies and how to be helpful. Students are given tools to report unsafe situations and to prevent them by making better choices. Frequent discussions, all-school assemblies (which also build community), and posters serve as reminders of the importance of safety. By emphasizing physical and emotional safety first, we express our belief that connection and a sense of belonging are what motivate children to behave, and are the foundation of emotional intelligence and academic success.

### **Pro-social Skills and Accountability**

Central to our policy is also the belief that the goal of guidance and discipline is to help children lead fulfilling and moral lives. Our goal is to help children become self-aware, build positive relationships and self-esteem and resolve conflicts effectively and independently. Thus, we actively teach and model social skills, just as we do academic skills. Problems are viewed as teaching opportunities and misbehavior is seen as an expression of a need for knowledge and understanding. Children learn skills in the context of problems or conflicts or during frequent group discussions and role-plays. Children are expected to be self-disciplined and are held accountable for skills that have been taught.

### **Nonjudgmental Feedback, Consequences, and Problem Solving**

Traditional rule-based discipline models seek compliance through rewards and punishments and tend to address only acted out behaviors. Our approach to discipline addresses school rules and all inappropriate behavior, as well as children's emotional needs and developmental needs for social knowledge and skills. We do this by modeling appropriate, caring behavior and through skillful guidance, nonjudgmental feedback, and the use of consequences and problem solving.

Rewards and punishments involve adult judgment of behavior. Dependency on the judgment of others as the basis for moral decisions is, thus, encouraged. Consequences, how-

ever, encourage children to reflect. When children connect their behavior and the results of their behavior, they become more conscious of their actions and learn from their mistakes. They are empowered and develop internal standards for moral living. This “thinking and reflecting” approach is also consistent with our discovery and inquiry model of curriculum. In addition, rewards and punishments carry overt or covert messages of threat which reduce optimal functioning and inhibit problem solving, intrinsic motivation, and the ability to develop values of caring and respect. Natural and imposed consequences give children nonjudgmental feedback about their choices. Natural consequences arise from the child’s choices and interactions. They do not depend on adult imposition (If the child does not tie his/her shoe, he/she might fall.). Imposed consequences relate logically to established behavioral expectations and safety, and require adult intervention (“If you choose to grab and hit, you will play here on the floor by me with the toys I give you.”). The supervising adults develop imposed consequences. Children also help determine consequences and solve problems during school and class meetings. In this way, misbehavior is seen not only as a problem of the individual. Children are empowered to show disapproval for inappropriate behaviors and encouraged to coach each other in helpful ways.

### **Safe Spaces and Self-Calming Skills**

The use of “time out” is discouraged. Instead, most classrooms have a “safe space” where a child may go, or be encouraged to go, to gain composure and regroup. The safe place is designed to be comfortable and appealing, a place where stress can be released and emotional balance restored. We can all learn from our mistakes and make better decisions when we are calm. Self-calming skills are actively taught and children are expected to use these when in the “safe space.” Older students gradually learn how to find “safe space” within themselves as a transitional step that will help them in future settings where a physical safe space is not present.

### **Additional Support and Intervention**

Sometimes disruptive and unsafe behaviors require that a child be removed from the group. If a child is removed from the room, an adult will be present for supervision. In accordance with our policy and philosophy, the use of physical punishment is never employed at Awakening Seed.

Some children need additional support and guidance in order to succeed in school and life. Underlying behavior issues can be complex in the developing child. These are sometimes due to brain chemistry or uneven or immature neural development. Considerable support, openness and expertise are required to address these, and sometimes only incremental change can be expected.

Most behavior problems can be addressed successfully during the course of the day at school. If a problem persists, the parents are asked to work with the teacher and the child to develop a plan to solve the problem. Occasionally, a child’s unsafe behavior necessitates that a parent is called during school hours to address an issue. Repeated unsafe or disruptive behavior may necessitate that the child leave school for the day.

If your child displays concerning behaviors, you will be notified and a conference will be requested with the classroom teacher and the school Director or Assistant Director. Depending on the observed behaviors, a plan will be put in order which may include some or all of the following: a behavior plan (to link school behaviors to consequences and celebrations of success at home), a developmental evaluation, consultation with developmental specialist or therapist, and a time line for reaching target goals. Some teachers may

choose to put the plan in writing so there is a clear and succinct written record of the things that the child, parent and teacher agree to do with an established date for reviewing progress.

Like plants that require different amounts of sunlight and water, children require different types of attention to succeed in school. Each child has important talents and qualities that contribute to the success and positive development of other children and the community. Our intention is to be inclusive with our student population, honoring diverse needs, while offering a healthy, positive learning environment. We give our best to children on a daily basis and expect parents to do the same. There will be situations in which we will expect extra support from parents in order to help a child succeed. We are willing to go a long way with a family if we know that our work at school is being supported at home.

### **Withdrawal**

Although we work hard to help each and every child succeed at our school, some students may need an alternative setting. If, after intervention by the school and parents, a child's problematic behaviors persist, it may be in the child's best interest to be placed elsewhere. Programs with additional services may be required to meet the child's needs more successfully. Such decisions will be made by the classroom teacher and the school directors.

### **Playground Supervision Guidelines**

- Circulate to all the children within your designated area to provide a safe environment where all children feel secure
- If no children are playing in your designated area, move to where children are
- Scan the playground or room continually, rather than focusing on one or two children
- Be proactive--listen, observe, question, PREVENT problems before they happen
- Evaluate and intervene in situations that are potentially dangerous
- If you are unsure if a situation is problematic or not, or need assistance in resolving a situation, seek the advice of an experienced staff member
- Foster the development of autonomy in children
- Demonstrate sensitivity to the needs and feelings of all students
- Help to maintain positive and productive student behavior
- Help children to develop open-mindedness and embrace diversity
- Help children develop a respectful attitude for the environment and for those who inhabit it
- Allow children the opportunity to solve their own problems
- Keep an extra close eye on children or groups of children who have a tendency toward conflicts or unsafe behavior

### **Playground Rules**

- Only one child is permitted on the swing at any given time. No twisting on the swing. (This causes damage to the swing as well as injury to children.)
- Children should always sit upright in swings, rather than leaning backwards (to avoid neck injury).
- Only one child is permitted on the monkey bars at a time.
- Inappropriate or dangerous looking climbing on any of the playground equipment is NOT permitted at any time. Climbing or running up the slide is not permitted.

- Children are not permitted to climb on the playground wall and should always stay within the grassy area, unless permission is given for students to work in their outdoor classroom areas.
- Trucks and toys will be confined to the sand and dirt areas. Bikes must be used on the designated sidewalk area of the playground.
- Bikes should be ridden rather than pushed from behind. Children are not permitted to stand on trikes at any time.
- Balls and games requiring balls will be played only on the grassy area or basketball court.
- Ropes, strings, etc. may NOT be tied to anything (e.g., playground equipment, bikes, trees, other children, or oneself).
- Children should use the outside drinking fountain during recess and before and after regular school hours. The drinking fountain shall NOT be used for washing sandy hands.
- Dirty, sandy, or muddy children will not be allowed in the building (PLEASE help to reduce the number of daily hours required for janitorial duties!) Sand must be emptied from shoes, socks, and pockets before reentering the school building.
- Any holes dug should be no deeper than one foot deep in the sand or dirt areas
- Hole digging in the outdoor areas is not permitted, due to the safety risks they present when installing the shade screens.
- Children who damage and destroy school equipment will be asked to replace all damaged items.
- CHILDREN ARE NOT PERMITTED TO BE IN THE BUILDING OR ON THE PLAYGROUND WITHOUT ADULT SUPERVISION AT ANY TIME. When a child needs to leave the playground to go inside, he/she is required to have a playground bracelet, which designates permission given to enter the building. The children should use only the door to the hallway.
- If a preschool child needs to go inside for a change of clothes, he or she should be accompanied by a staff member to assist.
- If an accident occurs that may warrant further medical attention, a report must be filed in the accident report book in the office and the parent and/or paramedics may need to be called, depending on the severity of the injury.

## Language We Use

- Use positive strategies and positive language for conflict resolution (children who feel respected will be less likely to engage in power struggles)
- Examples of positive language:  
*"Please choose another area in which to play." instead of "Don't play here."*  
*"You need to walk." or "Walking feet, please." instead of "Don't run." or "Stop running."*  
*"Please untwist the swing." instead of "Please don't twist the swing."*  
*"Please use the bike/swing/sand toys, safely/with good judgment."*
- Draw attention to positive behaviors, instead of negative  
*"Have you noticed how (child's name) is waiting patiently/sitting quietly/playing with the trucks?"*
- Focus on WHAT questions instead of WHY questions:  
*"What happened?" rather than "Why did you do that?"*  
*"What do you want to say to the person who hurt you or your feelings?"*  
*"What do you want them to do?... (keep it in the positive format)"*
- Try to avoid the words "No" and "We don't do that." (again – keep it positive and tell

them what you want them to do)

- Suggest that children face each other and/or establish eye contact when discussing a problem
- Suggest making amends with kindness, rather than forcing false words (e. g. "Can you say something to (child's name) that might make her/him feel better?" rather than forcing an apology immediately (later on an apology may be important, when it can be delivered in a sincere way)

## **When A Problem Arises**

- Use behavior redirection instead of consequence, where appropriate  
*"Please find something else to do for a while." or "Would you like to play on the swing until you feel calmer/until it's your turn?"*
- If a consequence is necessary, choose one that fits the action as closely as possible e.g. collect rocks from the playground for inappropriate use of rocks/sand/dirt clods show an act of kindness toward someone who has been hurt, excluded, etc.
- Make amends for disrespectful language and/or behavior (write an apology/spend time with them during projects)
- Place realistic, age-appropriate limits on consequences especially for preschoolers (3-5 minutes away from area/structure/toy/vehicle is all the attention span can handle)
- Please avoid using the term "TIME OUT" (Lillian Katz, an internationally respected early childhood educator, once said, "Timeout develops a disposition for revenge.")
- If a child needs time alone to think or calm down, communicate this in a positive manner
- Before the child returns to the group or previous activity, be sure the child can articulate what it was intended that he/she learn from the reflection time in the event that a child needs to be restrained, for the sake of his/her own safety or that of other children (e.g. if a child is running out of the building), take great caution to be sure the child is held in a firm but harmless way--a child's mouth (or face) should never be covered (even if the noise is REALLY LOUD!)
- At no time should a child be hit or harmed--any such action will result in immediate termination of employment or opportunity to volunteer, intern, etc.
- If a child's concerning behavior is repeated, the classroom teacher, Director, Assistant Director, and/or After School Director, or should be notified so further consequences or interventions can follow

## **Threats and Violent Behavior**

Safety is of utmost importance at the Seed. Awakening Seed has a no weapons (imaginary, toy, or otherwise), no violence policy. Verbal threats and physical violence are not tolerated and parents of any child involved in these behaviors shall be called immediately. Children involved in such activities will be given an age appropriate consequence, and if this behavior continues, parents may be asked to withdraw the child from Awakening Seed School. If at any time you are frustrated beyond the point of composure, please let someone else close take over for you or ask the administration for help.

## **Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse**

All Awakening Seed staff members are required by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse. If you suspect abuse of any kind, please inform an administrator immediately.

If a child discloses information that might lead you to suspect abuse, respond to the disclosure in the following way:

- Listen to the child openly and calmly
- Don't make promises you can't keep
- Tell the child that
  - you believe him/her
  - you will do your best to find help
  - you are glad they told you
  - you cannot keep this information a secret (it is the law that this information must be reported)
  - it is not the child's fault
- Then immediately report to administrator who will contact CPS

All new staff members will receive additional training in how to respond to reports of suspected child abuse during the new staff orientation.

## **Resources for More Guidance/Discipline Information**

*You Can't Say You Can't Play* – Vivian Paley

*Conscious Discipline* – Dr. Becky Bailey

*Challenging Behavior in Young Children* – Kaiser/Rasminsky

*Children the Challenge* – Rudolph Dreikurs, M.D.

*The Explosive Child* – Ross W. Greene, Ph.D.

*There's Gotta Be a Better Way* – Dr. Becky Bailey

*How to Behave So Your Children Will, Too* – Sal Severe

*How to Behave So Your Preschooler Will, Too* – Sal Severe

*Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline* – Dr. Becky Bailey

*Schools with Spirit: Nurturing the Inner Lives of Children and Teachers* – L. Lantieri (Ed.)

*How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk* – Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

*Positive Discipline* – Jane Nelson Ed.D. and Lynn Lott, M.F.C.C.

*1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2-12* - Dr. Thomas Phelan

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT AWAKENING SEED**

Website: [www.awakeningseedschool.org](http://www.awakeningseedschool.org)

Director: Mary Glover [seedsdirector@mac.com](mailto:seedsdirector@mac.com)

School Phone: (602) 454-2606