

A Vibrant Learning Community



GOLDEN VALLEY
CHARTER SCHOOLS

K-8 Tuition-Free Public Waldorf Schools

Established 1999



WHAT IS WALDORF?

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 200 public and private Waldorf schools in North America.

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 1,200 charter schools serving over 158,000 students across the state. Charter schools are free to adopt their own teaching methodologies and are held to the same performance standards as other public schools.

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 intelligent lessons that build virtues such as compassion and collaboration. We expand the definition of the classroom beyond four walls into the natural world.

At Golden Valley we develop thinking by teaching children to observe objectively with wide awake curiosity. By using storytelling as a teaching tool, we engage the imagination and feeling life of the children in harmony with the thinking mind. When imagination, curiosity and objective attention are combined, new answers emerge from complex questions.

Waldorf Education is well designed to foster balanced growth, academic excellence and healthy human development in children. 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 learning that truly addresses the educational needs of today's children for tomorrow's world.

A Bridge Between Home & School

Children find their home at Golden Valley Charter School

BY KATE GONZALES

Claire Toney wanted a school that was the right fit for her daughter.

Ashlynn, then 9, possessed a love of learning but had trouble focusing in mainstream classrooms, which tend to have children sitting more and creating less through the day.

As Toney was preparing to enroll Ashlynn into fourth grade, she discovered Golden Valley Charter Schools through word of mouth and arranged to tour one of the schools. The moment she and her husband, James, stepped inside a classroom, they knew they had found the right fit for Ashlynn because of the school's emphasis on creativity and active learning.

"It was a different way of teaching the children, and that's what impressed me," Toney says. Music and art were worked into daily lessons, and Toney thought the focus on creative expression would better suit Ashlynn.

"It just felt right to us," she says. "Everything they learn is developmentally appropriate so they're ready to take it in."

The Waldorf Charter Schools focus on learning through storytelling, experience and observation. Instead of only reading about physics, Ashlynn's teacher created light and shadow experiments that allowed the students to participate in the lesson and begin to have their own observations.

It was part of the "something extra" that Ashlynn needed.

When it was time to enroll her younger son, Alex, into kindergarten, Toney knew she wanted him to join Ashlynn at Golden Valley. With Alex, she saw what the kindergarten program offered and continued to be impressed.

"It was kind of magical," says Toney. "They had circle time, they sang songs, went to the river and to the park. That was a good curriculum."

Ashlynn is now in eighth grade — her final year at Golden Valley — and Alex is in third. Ashlynn has gained confidence



Claire Toney and her son Alex, 8, read at home together. Alex and sister Ashlynn, 13, have both flourished since enrolling at Golden Valley Charter Schools.

PHOTO BY NATE ECKLER

"Everything they learn is developmentally appropriate so they're ready to take it in."

Claire Toney,
Golden Valley Charter School parent

in her artistic skills and is often a go-to student for projects like creating stage backdrops. She has also grown more self-reliant.

Alex has developed hands-on skills that his peers in traditional schools often lack, like knitting. Toney says he has also become more emotionally mature and open to expressing his feelings. This is due to Golden Valley's emphasis on social-emotional development.

"He has a really good vocabulary about how he feels," she says.

Toney says their experience at the school has made both her children more well-rounded people.

"I really want my kids to know who they are, and to really embrace their differences and uniqueness in the world, and also to be part of the world," Toney says. "It was really a blessing that we found Golden Valley."

Kindergarten Teacher Sally Buck leads children in a cooperative circle game.
PHOTO BY LOUISE MITCHELL



Kindergarten:

Building capacities to
last a lifetime

The regular routines of the kindergarten day build healthy habits, foster rich imagination and help the children to experience a deep sense of connection with life's rhythms. The Kindergarten, which includes Transitional Kindergarten, is multi-age and welcomes children aged 4 1/2 - 6 years of age. Household chores such as cooking, bread baking and gardening help the young child to rejoice in meaningful participation in

daily life. The teacher tells carefully selected stories, creates puppet plays, and leads the children in singing, movement and verses as well as painting and handwork. Ample time is given to free play. The kindergarten curriculum fosters the development of healthy social habits, strong language skills, self-control, focus, memory and imagination — important capacities that continue to grow and develop throughout the school years and into adulthood.

OUTDOOR HOME STUDY KINDERGARTEN

The Cherry Blossom Outdoor Home Study Kindergarten Program offers children the opportunity to spend three days a week experiencing the wonder and beauty that nature provides. Their days at school include song, verse, craft, snack, story, time for cooperative and imaginative play, and plenty of opportunities for large motor development while they hike on the surrounding American River Parkway trail system. Two days a week the family is provided with materials and curriculum to use in the home. Families are supported by the teacher with regular one-on-one meetings and monthly parenting evenings.



PHOTO COURTESY
OF GOLDEN VALLEY
CHARTER SCHOOLS

Developing Lifelong Learners

A look at what makes Golden Valley unique



Since its founding in 1999, Golden Valley has offered a unique and highly effective interdisciplinary curriculum based on a deep understanding of the developmental stages of childhood. Here, learning is embedded in storytelling, movement, arts, music and direct experience of natural phenomena. The goal is to help students develop to their highest potential so they will one day actively create and participate in a vibrant, healthy society that serves the good of all.

Classroom Environment

Great care is taken to cultivate a calm and beautiful classroom environment at Golden Valley. Teachers create artistic, richly colored black-board drawings to illustrate their lessons. Rooms are painted in soft, harmonious colors and are free of overstimulating and distracting clutter. Displays contribute to the harmonious look of the room, and either highlight student work, relate to classroom lessons, or celebrate the cycles of nature. The result is that classrooms feel warm and inviting.

Academics

Featuring full integration of the arts in all subjects, Golden Valley students receive a rich, challenging and comprehensive academic curriculum. Creative assignments teach them to work diligently, to be fully engaged with their hearts and will as well as with the mind, and to take full ownership of their own learning. School is an exciting journey of discovery and ever-expanding horizons.

Arts & Music

Visual arts, poetry, movement, drama, storytelling and music are incorporated into every aspect of learning at Golden Valley. From first through eighth grade, students create their own "textbooks," called main lesson books, in which they write and carefully illustrate the material from the lesson. Content-rich lessons in history, mythology, geography and science are embedded in stories, and narratives are told (not read) by the teacher.

Field Trips

Not all learning happens in the classroom. Students at Golden Valley enjoy a wide variety of enriching field trips throughout their elementary school years. They visit museums, attend plays and concerts, take overnight camping trips to National parks, explore caves and other geological sites, and visit working farms where they get a first-hand experience of the work that produces their food. Visits to historical sites and participation in environmental education programs bring history to life. These are just a few examples of field trips that students remember long after their school years are behind them.

Our Mission:

We prepare our students to consciously engage with our evolving world by inspiring a lifelong passion for learning.

Active Learning

Students at Golden Valley learn a wide variety of skills throughout their school years by engaging in many different hands-on activities. Handwork classes, a regular part of the weekly rhythm from kindergarten through eighth grade, feature knitting and crocheting, embroidery, sewing, and design work. The gardening program intimately involves students with the cycles of nature. Students are immersed in the life of the garden through weeding, planting, harvesting, composting, and measuring and building gardening projects. These activities foster strong thinking and math skills, manual dexterity, and self-confidence. In addition to handwork and gardening, students attend regular classes in Spanish, painting, music, movement and games.

Athletics and Extracurricular Activities

Golden Valley takes pride in its extracurricular programs. From Ukulele Club and creative writing to basketball, volleyball and tennis, GV students have a wide range of activities to choose from. New programs are added based on student and parent interest.

Self-Discovery

The Golden Valley curriculum is designed to encourage students to embrace their own unique ideas and talents so they can one day become active participants in their world. As they discover the world through the curriculum, they simultaneously discover themselves. Ultimately, students leave Golden Valley Charter Schools with the tools and the desire to direct their own lives.

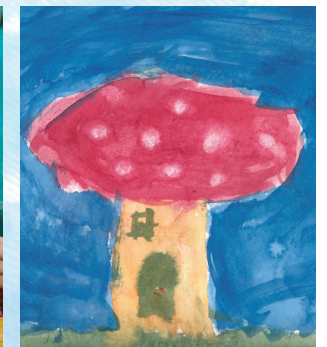
Building Strong Character and a Vibrant Community

Golden Valley is strongly committed to character education for all age levels. Two specific programs work together synergistically to foster a vibrant, healthy community life. Teachers work with the Virtues Project™, which provides powerful tools for discovering, appreciating and developing the very best in each student. The Nurtured Heart approach to classroom management provides guidelines for helping students learn positive habits and productive strategies for getting needs met. Both programs encourage students to engage in social/emotional skills lessons, such as making and keeping friends and acceptance of differences

in others. Since teachers stay with their classes over a period of consecutive years, they are able to foster fruitful relationships with students and parents. In addition, students engage in social/emotional skills lessons, such as making and keeping friends and acceptance of differences in others.

High School and Beyond

Students graduate from Golden Valley with a strong foundation for success in high school and beyond. Not only do they possess the necessary academic skills, but they have a breadth and depth of understanding of the world and an eagerness to learn more. In their years at Golden Valley they develop self-discipline, curiosity and a true love of learning. They are well on their way to taking their place in the world as compassionate, responsible and creative adults.



HOLISTIC EDUCATION

All teachers at Golden Valley have their California teaching credential and have or are obtaining a Waldorf teaching certificate. Teachers say they enjoy the Golden Valley environment because of the many factors that make it a unique and rewarding place to work.

BUILDING A BOND

Grades teachers stay with their classes over a period of consecutive years, fostering trust, allowing for long-term learning and giving broader context for the evaluation of student growth.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Many faculty members are parents of students, and a large number of parents are active volunteers, meaning adults are as invested in the school as students. "That's a huge plus," says teacher Ryan Sutton. "The volunteer level at the school is high, higher than any other school I've ever worked for as a teacher. What that creates is a sense of ownership of the school."

INSPIRED TEACHERS DESIGN CREATIVE LESSONS

Golden Valley teachers work hard to create their own unique lessons that combine academics with opportunities for social and emotional learning and creative expression. For instance, Sutton develops creative lessons with trickier art materials, like pastels and charcoal, to teach patience and discipline while his students master a new medium. "Learning to pause during an experience that's frustrating in an era of, 'What's next, what's next, what's next?' is a good skill to teach them," Sutton says.

"What is really special about this school is the joy you feel when you step on this campus."

Ryan Sutton,
teacher



A Dream Job

Middle school teacher brings passion to his creative lessons

BY JOHN FLYNN



Ryan Sutton was creatively stifled working as a production assistant for Warner Brothers Studios when a new career came to him in a dream.

"I was trying to figure myself out, and it's going to sound weird, but one night I had a dream where I was standing in front of a class of kids," Sutton says. "And they were asking me questions and I was answering their questions and it felt really good. And from that moment on, I realized I needed to be a teacher."

Sutton earned his Masters in Education then taught everywhere from a Beverly Hills private school to an underserved Catholic school until finding a home at Golden Valley Charter Schools.



"I feel more creatively fulfilled than ever," he says. "I love the freedom that I have to create a lesson, to tell a story. It's really about [students] observing phenomena and trying to interpret it in a meaningful way for themselves."

An example: When he taught about acids and bases, he had students observe the different chemical reactions when cabbage juice was mixed with hydrochloric acid and ammonia before teaching the overarching theory.

"It benefits any kind of kinesthetic or visual learner. Anyone who really needs to get their hands or their eyes on something," he says. "And to me, there's nothing better than that. They're making really solid connections with what you're presenting them."

This innovative flip on conventional teaching combined with a heavy emphasis on music, art, storytelling and gardening guides students to think in innovative ways.

"The creative problem-solving, raw artistic skill, and an openness to different experiences is a huge advantage Waldorf students have," he says. "Eighth grade boys learning how to knit and sew is a pretty amazing thing to watch. Some of them can put up an eye-rolling face to it, but once they get involved in it, they realize it's an actual skill, and they think, 'It might be good for me to know how to fix my clothes.'"

After one informational meeting for community members, Sutton remembers the faces of prospective parents when they walked out and saw his middle school students playing guitar, sketching, walking on stilts and juggling in the hallway during recess.

"These parents just had jaws on the floor and I remember one of them actually saying, 'Wow, this is such a joyful place.'" he says. "What is really special about this school is the joy you feel when you step on this campus."

Artwork by Golden Valley Students

A Solid Foundation

Waldorf education provided college student skills to succeed

BY JOHN FLYNN

Waldorf schools give students a foundation for lifelong learning, and current Sacramento State sophomore Devan Kortan couldn't imagine a better place to spend his elementary and middle school years than Golden Valley.

"The adults at the school invested so much time in each kid," Kortan recalls. "As soon as they figured out that you liked a particular thing, they would totally hop onto that. Every day was interesting in its own way."

When Kortan started playing jazz guitar, the school gave him extra music lessons and gigs at school events. Since Waldorf teachers guide their students for more than the customary one year, Kortan appreciated the continuous support of his teacher and acknowledgment of his growth.

"The teacher had an idea of who you are year to year," he says. "So the grading and assessment didn't ride completely on the job you did on one particular assignment as opposed to the huge arc of your development."

Instead of reading from textbooks, Waldorf students create their own. During three- to four-week blocks, classes tackle one topic in depth during a morning "main lesson" during which the students fill books with reflections, notes and drawings that internalize the knowledge.

"They would plant the seed and you would just run with it," he says. "It sets you up nicely because now that's the way I take notes. It's about capturing the big ideas and putting them into your own thoughts."

"We all grew up together. We knew each other's stories. It was easy to exist in that environment."

Devan Kortan,
former Golden Valley Charter School student

Now a Sacramento State sophomore, Devan Kortan credits Golden Valley's supportive and personal environment with preparing him for his future.
PHOTO BY CHARLES GUNN



Kortan especially enjoyed Golden Valley's seasonal festivals. The events' food and entertainment all came from parents, teachers, and students. The students participated in group activities like weaving the May Pole during the May Day celebration or singing songs while holding homemade candles during the Winter Festival of Lights. Former students come back to the schools during festivals to renew friendships and see their former teachers.

"Waldorf festival community is so freaking awesome," he says.

"All of them have an element of doing something together. It was an incredible sense of community."

After Golden Valley, Kortan attended Rio Americano High School, where he excelled in part because the love of learning instilled during his early years made him eager to complete the work his classmates were quick to dismiss. But he missed the harmonious culture of his alma mater.

"In high school, there's the academic side, but the added stress of 'drama' and friend-making," he says. "At Golden Valley, there wasn't any of that because everyone loved each other. We all grew

up together. We knew each other's stories. It was easy to exist in that environment."

BRIGHT FUTURES AWAIT

Golden Valley graduates are well-prepared for high school, college and beyond. Graduates are fortunate enough to have the option of continuing their public Waldorf education through high school by attending George Washington Carver High School of the Arts and Sciences, a public Waldorf school located in Sacramento, or other charter and private high schools in the area. Graduates also attend their local high schools.

Upon graduating from high school, Golden Valley alumni have been accepted to Universities of California and California State Universities, Mills College, Claremont College, Ursinus College, University of San Francisco, University of Wisconsin and many others.

Take the Next Step

If you are looking for a unique, enriching educational experience for your child, you've found it at Golden Valley Charter Schools. Golden Valley schools are FREE public charter schools in the Sacramento area that serve kindergarten through eighth-grade students and their families.



6550 Filbert Avenue
Orangevale, CA
916-987-1490



9601 Lake Natoma Drive
Orangevale, CA
916-987-6141

www.goldenvalleycharter.org

HOW TO ENROLL



Attend a parent information meeting. Applications will be made available at the end of the meeting and must be completed during open enrollment in January and February.



Applicants are then entered into a lottery for a public random drawing. Parents will be notified via email, and have 48 hours to respond.



Once the space is accepted, a preregistration packet will be emailed for parents to complete.

For information on the next parent information meeting, call your school of choice or visit our website at www.goldenvalleycharter.org

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT GOLDEN VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOLS?



"That it's really safe and ... I like that we have handwork, Spanish, music and recess."

BENJAMIN ESTES,
second grade



"I like that the kids are nice. My old school compared to here — these kids are a lot more nurturing as well as the teachers."

JOLIE GUITRON,
fourth grade



"I like drawing and painting and reading. We do a lot of fun things like that here."

SOPHIE CRIPPIN,
fifth grade



"I like being able to draw, being more creative, and playing music."

RYAN COLE,
sixth grade



"It's a lot of fun. You get really close to all your classmates. You get to learn in a different way. ... The teachers grow very close to students so you have a very great bond with all your teachers."

MADISON FRANZEN,
eighth grade

COMMON QUESTIONS

HOW DO STUDENTS LEARN READING?

The Waldorf approach to reading proceeds from spoken language to writing to reading. In first grade the alphabet is formally introduced in an imaginative, pictorial way. Children discover each letter as a symbol representing an element in a story told by the teacher. Learning to write first words and then sentences based upon the stories opens the door to reading. Once students are fully reading, they turn to original source texts such as classic literature and biographies, reading many great books throughout their grade school years. Students develop a natural love of reading and an appreciation for the beauty and power of language. These are the foundation for true literacy.

DOES GOLDEN VALLEY USE COMMON CORE STANDARDS?

Yes. As a California public school, Golden Valley adheres to Common Core standards. The Alliance for Waldorf Public Education has aligned Common Core requirements with Waldorf pedagogy to develop curriculum that meets both standards.

HOW IS TECHNOLOGY INCORPORATED INTO THE CURRICULUM?

Golden Valley students have weekly computer classes starting in the middle grades. In addition to keyboarding they learn other important computer skills, including the crucial one of using the internet in a socially responsible and safe way.



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