Dear Kindergarten Parents,

 We hope this letter finds you enjoying a peaceful, playful and adventure filled summer. We have been busily preparing our new school to welcome your children this September. Words cannot express how grateful and honored we are to be working with you and your children as we embark upon this journey together. This is most certainly a communal and collaborative endeavor and as such we would like to share a little more about what to expect in the Kindergarten.

 Throughout each day we will be striving towards development of the whole child as we build their physical, social, emotional and neural capacities. The work in the Kindergarten classroom provides a critical foundation for a child’s academic success. Our “main lesson” each day consists of Circle time. During this time we are building a love of language through poetry, song, verse and imagination accompanied by fine and gross motor gestures and movements. The combination of “song and dance” builds the children’s capacities for auditory processing, speech articulation, and develops their proprioceptive system which enables a child to organize their body, concentrate and decode abstract shapes like letters and numbers. It is a common myth that Waldorf education does not “teach reading” until the second grade when in fact we begin building the very foundational skills for reading in the Kindergarten. Circle time is also where we will be working to develop bilateral integration, or a bridge between the right and the left brain. This integration is the difference between learning to read for understanding and simply memorizing. Another element of the day includes oral story telling. We will be building the children’s capacities for comprehension, vocabulary and the ability to sequence events through story telling each week. The children are told a story rather than read from a picture book in order to strengthen their inner picture building and recall skills. These skills are critical as their ability to synthesize information will greatly increase their overall comprehension. Overall comprehension and/or the ability to see the whole can be damaged by introducing decoding systems too early. Because we are working towards deep literacy we tell the same story for up to 3 weeks. The symbolic picture forming ability (imagination) that develops during this time is crucial for all future conceptual work. Another essential component of the Kindergarten is creative-play using simple natural materials. Creative play builds fundamental social skills as children play side by side, listening, sharing and helping one another. Problem-solving and self-regulation are also integrally infused during this time. Creative play not only takes place inside but outside as well. Every day the children are exposed to “Science” in an experiential way when they work and play in the garden, grounds and surrounding landscapes of our school. The children naturally experiment with the laws of physics as they build forts, pulleys, balance beams and see-saws. They learn about their environment and the dramatic seasonal changes we enjoy here in the Wood River Valley through weekly nature walks. In addition to creative indoor and outdoor play every day, we also enjoy a snack together. Snack is a time of reverence and community building. The children take part in preparing the food, setting and clearing the table, as well as serving and eating together. Measurement, geometric relationships, counting, and size discernment are just some of the mathematical skills that our mealtime together incorporates. Each day will also include an artistic activity. These activities enhance a child’s ability to focus, concentrate, develop hand-eye coordination and foster a sense of accomplishment. Such activities include watercolor painting, drawing, beeswax modeling, seasonal crafts, felting, sewing and finger knitting.

All of the above outlined activities, and more, are experienced in a beautiful, warm, homelike environment. As their teachers we seek to lead the work of the class in a kind, conscious, loving manner that is worthy of imitation. As you can see great care is taken in planning and providing an entry into school life that fosters wonder, joy and possibility. These truly are the early foundations for a life-long love of learning. The Kindergarten experience is meant to enliven the imagination and lovingly guide each child toward an understanding of the world and to plant the seeds for a successful school career and adult life.

With love from your Kindergarten teachers,

Kristen Albright, Jessica Banks, Kristen Funk, and Mandy Palan

\*\*\*Please watch for an email in early August in which we will include the two Kindergarten class lists, contact information and home visit sign-ups.