



Volo Natural Learning Community

Handbook 2024/2025

We are looking forward to a great year with the Volo Natural Learning Community. As the school year gets ready to launch, we are glad you are a part of this awesome endeavor. We will experience what school can be, not just what it is.

INTRODUCTION

This handbook provides information to support the healthy daily functioning of Volo learning community. Parents, please read and review this handbook before the school year starts. Please discuss relevant portions with your child or children who will be participating. Families will be expected to comply with the policies and expectations described in this handbook. The guiding perspective for our Volo community is that we work together with kindness, respect, and accountability. We value each individual and each other. This handbook cannot spell out exactly how community interactions and responsibilities should always occur. We rely on each other to choose intelligent, morally sound decisions.

WELCOME

Welcome to Volo Natural Learning Community. We combine our strengths, talents, experiences, and personalities to create and sustain a dynamic, adaptive, resilient community where everyone is valued. We are like an ecosystem in that we comprise many different, interacting parts. Even the weaknesses and struggles of individuals help to draw us together. Our strength lies in our good will and integrity.

The Volo Natural Learning Community strives to provide a warmly supportive place for people to develop well-being as individuals and members of a larger society. Volo fulfills a unique educational role in an integrated society.

VISION

To inspire and support lifelong well-being through creative learning.

We envision a young person moving forward with justified confidence, facing the future and successfully meeting the challenges and opportunities that await them. A child-

centered, world-class education advances that goal. Volo was created to provide such an education.

We see the need for education that meet the needs of our times while looking toward a future with yet unknown potential and challenges. We recognize the need for education practices that incorporate the best available ideas. We are standing on the shoulders of giants, drawing inspiration and perspective from great thinkers and effective education systems.

MISSION

To empower individuals by providing nature-inspired creative learning experiences, supporting agency, and fostering resilience within a supportive community.

Volo draws together many factors in a system purposefully designed for improved learning of what matters in the lives of young people, in ways that foster retention, well-being, motivation, and self-efficacy. Such a system necessarily allows dynamic experiences and exhibits many interacting and emergent properties. As in nature's ecosystems, there are keystone components, which means parts that powerfully and positively influence the rest of the system.

Volo highlights three keystone elements crucial for enlightened modern education: experiences outdoors in nature; engaging and nurturing personal agency, which refers to support for making choices; and community, or integration in a relatively diverse group of people who know and care for each other. While many other components contribute to the education we need, the three keystone elements of nature-based learning, agency, and community exert powerful positive influences on a system for learning what matters most; these elements help to express Volo's vision and underpin Volo's practices.

VISION AND MISSION IN ACTION

- Volo graduates will demonstrate curiosity, creativity, self-efficacy, social and emotional awareness, physical abilities, and academic excellence in rigorous environments.
- Volo will be recognized by the community as a highly desirable educational option and will be sought after by families in the surrounding community who maintain and seek enrollment.
- Volo will cultivate a talented team of teachers, also called facilitators, who develop with the students and other community members, a full, integrated, experiential curriculum including Volo's keystone elements and service learning with meaningful projects.
- Volo will offer a supportive and accepting environment.
- Volo will be supported by strong families, lively young people, and dedicated staff.

CORE PHILOSOPHY

Love the person

Volo's philosophy encompasses multi-faceted dimensions of perspective, value, and practice. The broader philosophy guiding Volo's educational practices and intentions for the Volo learning community derives from a simple core, expressed in the phrase "Love the person."

Members of the Volo community value and emphasize kindness, compassion, understanding, and mercy for all. Our core philosophy expresses a profound and impactful moral perspective; for example, it aligns with the concepts of chesed and rachamei, important in Judaism; charity and loving kindness, important in Christianity; rahmah, important in Islam; metta and karuna, important in Buddhism; daya and karuna, important in Hinduism; and with ren and yi, important in Confucianism.

We view these virtues as noble and essential personal qualities to be cultivated; guides to understanding every learner in the Volo community; and guides to behavior and relationships with everyone, fostering harmony, empathy, goodwill, and kindness toward oneself and others. We strive to operate with genuine concern, forgiveness, and compassion for every person.

Our relationships at Volo are intended to embody the concept of deep respect found in the African greeting "sawubona" (Zulu), which means, "I see you" and emphasizes respect and recognition of the humanity and valued existence of the other person, both as an individual and as an interconnected member of the community.

Kindness includes helping people develop well, even though that unavoidably includes some discomfort. For example, a teacher or parent may kindly respond to a question by asking the questioner how they would answer their own question, or by kindly encouraging a person to solve a problem on their own. We recognize that people naturally benefit from motivation, encouragement, support, and reasonable challenges. We also recognize that working through tough choices and experiencing failure are components of healthy development.

We extend our intentions of goodwill, kindness, and mercy to all living things. We express responsibility and care for the living and nonliving things that interact to support life on earth. We strive for a sense of confident humility, which includes gratitude and appreciation for oneself, other people, other living things, and our environment. We strive to humbly acknowledge the value of all things, even when we do not perceive personal benefit from them.

VALUES

Volo appreciates young people. We recognize that young people are curious about themselves and the world around them, that they are talented, that they inherently want to learn and are learning all the time, that they are innately creative and inclined to friendship and empathy. Volo serves to inspire, motivate, support, encourage, nourish, and guide young people. We appreciate and strive to nourish exuberance and delight.

The Volo community values learning – specifically learning for lifelong well-being. To that end, we appreciate and insist on an institutional model that remains adaptive and responsive over time to the needs and opportunities of families in the area.

While the learning community will develop dynamically over time, three keystone elements are intended to remain true. Like keystone species in ecosystems, these keystone elements are disproportionately important in holding the ecosystem of our learning community together; they will be referred to here as foundational values. Values are based on knowledge and beliefs, which can be summarized as a philosophy, and which we summarize here as the philosophical basis. The philosophical basis for these foundational values is built from reliable research, empirical evidence, experience, and reason. The keystone values lead to and underpin guiding principles.

Outdoor, Nature-Based Learning

We value an outdoor lifestyle and experience in nature as a context for learning. We value the understanding of a person's place in the natural world, where nature includes both people and the world outside the direct control of people. Nature is interesting to people. Experiences in nature are often deeply compelling, appreciated, and sought by people. Understanding place through experience, play, and purposeful learning in nature provides benefits to people and tends toward better care for the world around us, which in turn tends to improve lives. We advocate for place-based outdoor education, in which sensitivity to local surroundings is an integral, important element, and culture is part of place. We also recognize that valuable learning can occur indoors. We support learning environments that include a dynamic balance between outdoor and indoor learning opportunities. Because indoor learning is common, and we believe the scales are usually tilted toward indoor learning, we emphasize outdoor learning as a foundational element.

Philosophical Basis

- Getting people outside into nature provides opportunities for learning and healthy development. We believe further that while many learning practices are important, outdoor learning is uniquely valuable and is irreplaceable as a component of human development.
- Ecological literacy contributes to a person's well-being.

- Playing outside is fundamentally valuable for healthy human development.
- People learn in and from nature by observing, playing, reflecting, experimenting, participating in natural processes such as growing food and restoring natural areas, and communicating.
- Environmental stewardship is an ethical responsibility.
- As part of our stewardship ethic, we value and commit to lead and participate in service projects that benefit healthy ecosystem structure and processes.

Agency

Agency means the ability to choose. We respect the choices, feelings, wishes, rights, and traditions of all people of any age involved at the learning community. Agency is integral to participatory learning and the development of self-directed learning skills, which are in turn crucially important for autonomy, fulfillment, and well-being. In our view, participatory learning acknowledges developmental differences and abilities without diminishing or exaggerating the worth of individuals who are early or late in development or who are unique in development.

Philosophical Basis

- Respect for individuals includes both purposeful learning and intuitive learning.
 - Learning for fulfillment and well-being includes purposeful learning and purposeful learning is part of natural learning in human development; this means that humans naturally develop intentions to learn and consciously implement learning plans. We also believe that benefits are provided by a combination of self-direction and guidance.
 - People learn naturally through many processes that are not consciously controlled. We trust research and experience showing that much learning of value for fulfillment and well-being occurs without conscious planning, but rather is intuitive and reflects social context, nature, play, etc.
- Excellent learning includes an appropriate mix of guided and unguided opportunities.
- People who wish to learn should be allowed to participate in all aspects of their learning process in ways that are developmentally appropriate.
- Respect for self and others is important.

Community

Community is a fundamental value of our educational perspective because it expresses our certainty that people need real-life social connection and experience, and that efforts

to support learning crucially include supporting communities that provide necessary context for learning. Experience and study verify that people need relationships with other people to develop well-being emotionally, mentally, physically, socially, and spiritually. We trust the wisdom of history in which people worked together and learned from each other. We recognize the value of a multi-aged community. We value the feelings and opinions of young and old people, recognizing that learning involves a dynamic balance between individuals. Learning may be likened to a dance in which the dancers move according to their strengths and abilities, with personal motivation and responsibility, while responding to and supporting the other dancers and guides. While we recognize that no external community can fully take the place of family, we assert that communities can enhance and strengthen the positive roles of families for all of us, whatever the status or condition of our own families. We also believe it is important to practice democracy through implementation of democratic principles in smaller communities to develop the understandings and skills needed for participation in larger democratic societies.

Philosophical Basis

- A community is important for learning.
- Democratic processes are important for community decisions. Democratic processes may include participation following developmental capacity and ability. Systematic processes designed to support and scaffold collaboration (e.g., structured decision making, decision-making teams, and procedural guides) may be implemented to support democratic relationships.
- A desirable learning community is inclusive. We wish to welcome people who will participate in the ecosystem of our learning community.
- Appropriate for the community are widely-valued aspects of interpersonal behavior such as loving kindness, empathy, loyalty, courtesy, honesty, justice, and fairness.
- The learning community is secular. As part of an intentionally safe, secular learning environment, spiritual perceptions are respected while spiritual or religious direction is not provided.
- Community members will do well to respect and honor the beliefs and practices of others.
- Through community involvement, individuals gain understanding and skills that help them succeed in society and change society for the better.
- Our learning community should contribute to equality and well-being of all people. We pledge to contribute to society through service projects.

PRINCIPLES

The Keystone Elements of the Learning Community (Outdoor Learning, Agency, and Community) support 15 Guiding Principles.

1. Much of the activity at the Learning Community will occur outside in nature.
2. Young people will be active participants in choices that affect their learning, within a developmentally appropriate, scaffolded environment that includes a warm, encouraging, community.
3. The community – including young people and their families, people old enough to be grandparents, and guides or learning facilitators – will decide many issues of community expectation and governance.
4. Young people will be supported in their choices; they will also be persuaded and encouraged to learn in important areas based on development, capacities, and individual interests. When young people choose to commit to a learning process, they will be aided by the learning community to accomplish their goals.
5. The learning environment includes a balance of play, study, and meaningful work.
6. Both individual and group activities will be balanced in the learning community.
7. Mixed-age grouping will be implemented when possible and appropriate.
8. The learning community will contribute to the broader community through service and meaningful projects such as ecological restoration, peer-tutoring and leadership, and improvement projects.
9. The learning community will be inclusive. It will be a secular learning environment where everybody will be safe to believe what they choose. People will be welcomed into the community regardless of skin color, ancestry, ethnic affiliation, gender, political perspective, beliefs, sense of humor, or other physiological or personality traits.
10. Every person has rights, including the right of expression, privacy, due process, and movement (not to be held a captive audience); these rights will be respected for all in the community. The community has a responsibility to recognize and protect these rights.
11. Community members will restrict themselves if needed for the sake of respecting and honoring others in the community, within reason.
12. Democratic practices may include systematic, structured processes, such as structured decision making; these processes may, in some cases, include special working groups or decision groups that are a subset of the larger community. In any major decision, thoughtful efforts will be made to incorporate reliable current scientific knowledge, empirical evidence, experience, and reason.

What the learning community is not or will not do:

13. The learning community will not provide everything a young person needs for their development.
14. Actions that are not in keeping with the values and interests of the learning community will not be welcomed. Harmful behavior will be prevented when possible and corrected when needed.
15. Some activities will not be options for free choice. For example, hours of unrestricted, indoor video game playing will not be an option.

HISTORY

Volo Natural Learning Community was initiated in 2020 by a small, creative, international team who recognized from experience that better education was needed for today's youth. The initial team was joined by advisors and supporters from the business, outdoor recreation, education, conservation, and organizational development worlds. The Volo team has included school founders, school administrators, Waldorf and Montessori teachers, homeschoolers, business leaders (including CEO's of companies), university administrators, psychologists, outdoor recreation specialists, nationally recognized youth program leaders, business and academic researchers, builders and skilled crafts-people, entrepreneurs, and parents.

Volo incorporated as a non-profit, public charity (501(c)(3)), homeschool cooperative in 2023. The Volo governing board included and still includes a remarkable group of business and education leaders from across the country. In the Park City area, a group of families began activities including Friday gatherings in the fall of 2023 and spring of 2024. Generous funders and donors supported each step of the way. Together, we have made possible an expanded program in 2024, which includes full-time school (a better, world-class school) and programs to support learning with Volo part time. Our journey has been marked by inspiration, innovation, courage, optimism and a respect and love for young people.

Acknowledgements

We thank the many people who have had a hand in initiating, creating and shaping Volo. Many of these people are still actively part of the Volo community, while some of them have moved on to other projects, leaving Volo better. Volo's largest donor has wished to remain anonymous. Many helpful ideas have come from young people. Helpful templates and examples of administrative documentation have come from many sources, notably including Wasatch Charter School in Salt Lake City.¹ Above all we are grateful for the families whose good will and trust have been enacted in adopting Volo early in its trajectory; we recognize that this creative endeavor requires optimism and vision. To the young people who have been participating in Volo, we say thanks and express our admiration for who they are, and for the warm, happy group that they have helped to create.

¹ Wasatch Charter School graciously shared advice and ideas from their experience as a relatively new alternative school, and documents that we have used as templates. Their Parent Handbook formed the boilerplate for this guide; some of the text in this guide that applies to both Wasatch Charter School and Volo we have used essentially verbatim, which has saved considerable time and provided Volo the benefit of the intelligence and experience of Emily Merchant, Kara Salisbury, Heather Campbell, and others.

ADMINISTRATION

Executive Director

Volo's Executive Director is responsible for the daily operations of the learning community and progress towards realizing Volo's mission and vision; in this, the Executive Director involves faculty, families, volunteers, and young people in collaborative, cooperative processes when possible. The Executive Director serves a leadership and coordinating function with authority delegated from the Governing Board to ensure compliance with bylaws, hire and terminate employees, oversee programs and operations, and create a positive culture.

In the first one to three years of Volo's full-time operation, the Executive Director will be responsible for pedagogical development, business and human resources, and other administration. The Executive Director will obtain assistance and delegate authority and responsibility to volunteers, part-time staff, and full-time staff as needed and possible. In time the role of the Executive Director will change as responsibility for administrative tasks shifts to other directors and the cooperative group of the learning community.

GOVERNANCE

During the first one to three years of Volo's full-time operation, governance includes three groups: the Governing Board, the Volo Council, and the Family Council. Each group involves somewhat different areas of influence: the Governing Board is responsible for financial and legal matters, the Volo Council is involved in pedagogical and daily operations matters, and the Family Council is mainly involved in the social realm of gathering and supporting families. The efficacy of these governing groups will be evaluated as needed, including an annual formal evaluation. It is anticipated that after about three years, governance will adapt to include expanded, cooperative roles by the learning community.

Governing Board

The Governing Board is responsible for the legal, financial, and policy aspects of the learning community. The Governing Board consists of five to nine voting members including parents and community members. The governing board also may include non-voting members and the Executive Director. Board meetings are held regularly, usually monthly.

Volo Council

The Volo Council comprises staff and students. The Executive Director and facilitators guide and hold primary responsibility for pedagogy and decisions about daily

operations. However, the Volo Council helps with pedagogical and operational decisions, in a developmentally appropriate manner. The Volo Council will meet regularly, typically on a weekly or twice-monthly basis, together with larger community-wide mid-term and annual meetings.

Family Council

The purpose of the Family Council is to develop community and facilitate parental involvement. The Family Council includes a parent coordinator and other members who wish to participate. The Family Council is available to all parents and other family members of students attending Volo. The Family Council will typically meet monthly.

COMMUNICATIONS

Healthy Communications

At Volo, we seek to create an authentic and nurturing community of students, faculty, staff, parents, neighbors, and friends. All members of this community are obliged to provide models worthy of imitation. We must model respect in our interactions with each other.

Although it is natural for questions and concerns to arise in a community, and although we unavoidably will not see eye-to-eye on some issues, we strive for sensitivity, kindness, and good manners. We are committed to communication that is productive and constructive. We strive to embody the core philosophy of "Love the person."

In a small community such as Volo, personal privacy matters. Community members have no right to know private details of other family's personal, financial, social, or professional lives. The tuition or contributions of other members should not be the topic of conversation or speculation. While details may be communicated by individuals as they will, the commitment of members of Volo's learning community is to not pry and to reserve judgment. We all understand that each member of the community should try to help as generously and positively as possible; with that understanding, we leave speculation and judgment behind and strive to ensure only that we are acting according to our highest and best nature. Gossiping is not in keeping with the respect required by a cooperative learning community.

To accomplish the goal of healthy communication, we abide by certain principles

1. We demonstrate respect in what we say and how we say it.
2. We focus on issues, not individuals.
3. We assume others are acting out of their best intentions.
4. We keep an open mind. We are positive and flexible. We ask questions first.

5. We respect the confidentiality of information imparted in confidence, including what is shared in group meetings. We honor the need of others to maintain confidentiality.

Guidelines

- When a question or issue arises concerning another person, we take it up appropriately and, as soon as possible, have an in-person conversation with that person. We ask clarifying questions. We demonstrate respect by speaking to people directly. We do not take the issue to others when the person is not present.
- We respect others' time and priorities by arranging appropriate times and places for conversations and meetings. Volo staff is not expected to respond to communications after hours, nor schedule meetings on weekends.
- We strive not to take things personally. We listen with an open heart and mind.
- We use all forms of communication thoughtfully.
- We do not condone or tolerate verbal, physical or sexual harassment.

Electronic Communications

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, written electronic communications lack the key visual cues, nuances and inflection of direct communication, which can cause misunderstandings; thus, problem-solving can often 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.

Text messaging should be reserved for personal communications and emergency communications. Text messaging should not be used for sharing concerns or resolving sensitive issues.

Cell Phone

Volo is typically a call-free zone. Adults and young people are expected to put away phones while involved in Volo activities. Students are not to use phones or smart watches except as specifically instructed (for example, to take photos as part of a lesson) or in emergency situations. In cases requiring ongoing coordination, one adult will be designated as the coordinating contact.

Confidentiality

A request for confidentiality must be honored absolutely, regardless of the format (electronic, phone, or in-person). Communications regarding families and students are considered confidential even without a specific request for confidentiality. If there is a threat of physical harm, you should file a police report with local law enforcement. If the threat is from a member of the Volo community, report the incident immediately to the Executive Director.

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 Executive Director.

Newsletters and Regular Information

Volo will provide regular updates through electronic media to families. Families will receive updates by email about Volo-sponsored activities. Only Volo-sponsored activities will be shared via Volo email lists. Families and staff will refrain from using Volo email lists for personal gain, or to promote private events or businesses.

Email is usually not a venue for raising concerns or resolving problems. Individuals with concerns may use email to request a meeting to discuss an issue but should plan to meet in person to address any sensitive or charged topics. Staff receiving emails that raise concerns may ask for an in-person meeting rather than providing a written response.

Short-term Reminders and Emergencies

Volo will use email, voice calls, and/or text messages to communicate time-sensitive information and emergency information. The contact information provided on registration forms will be used. If you would like communications to go to another number, please contact the Volo staff.

CALENDAR

Monday – Thursday Calendar

Fridays Calendar

Fall Term – Gather

Aug 26 - First Day of Fall Term

Sep 2 – Labor Day

Sep 12-19 - Fall Break

Oct 31 – Parent Meetings

Nov 21 – Last day of Fall Term

Nov 25-28 – Thanksgiving Break

Aug 30 – First Friday of Fall Term

Sep 13, 20 – Fall Break

Nov 22 – Last Friday of Fall Term

Nov 29 – Thanksgiving Break

Winter Term – Prepare

Dec 2 - First Day of Winter Term

Dec 19 – Parent Meetings

Dec 23 – Jan 3 – Holiday Break

Jan 20 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Feb 3-5 – Winter Break

Feb 6 – Parent Meetings

Feb 17 – Washington's Birthday

Feb 27– Last day of Winter Term

Dec 6 – First Friday of Winter Term

Dec 27, Jan 3 – Holiday Break

Feb 28 – Last Friday of Winter Term

Spring Term – Plant

Mar 3 -- First Day of Spring Term

Mar 24 – Apr 3 – Spring Break

May 22 – Parent Meetings

May 29 - Last Day of Spring Term

Mar 7 – First Friday of Spring Term

Mar 28, Apr 4 – Spring Break

May 30 – Last Friday of Spring Term

(See next page for month view)

2024/2025 Volo NLC

	in session		holiday / break		Special Event		Fridays													
August '24							September '24							October '24						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30						27	28	29	30	31		
November '24							December '24							January '25						
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29	30	31					26	27	28	29	30	31	
February '25							March '25							April '25						
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May '25																				
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25	26	27	28	29	30	31														

Closure – Inclement Weather Policy

Should inclement weather be determined to pose a significant obstacle to parents or faculty arriving at the Volo meeting place, the Volo meeting may be delayed two hours or canceled for the day. Parents will be notified using text or email.

Learning Progression

At Volo, the general learning paradigm encourages enthusiasm and confidence in the early years, then increasing fluency in foundational skills, followed by natural growth in leadership, empathy, service, high-level skills, and scholarship. Curiosity, creativity, confident humility, questioning, self-direction, and delight are nurtured throughout.

Personalized Learning Plans

Each student in the Exploratory will work with their family and a staff member to develop a personalized learning plan. The learning plan will be created early in the year, typically within 4 weeks of the student becoming active in Volo. Personalized learning plans will identify areas for achievement, goals, and milestones. Students will reflect on their plans weekly with a dedicated adult mentor, and adaptations or support will be provided as needed.

Core Standards

Volo enables developmentally informed learning; this means that the sequence of learning may be at times ahead of and at other times behind learning progressions published in other guidelines for specific ages or grades. State core education standards are referenced at Volo. Most core standards will be covered over a full progression through the high-school years at Volo.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

The progress of young people in Volo will be reported in conferences between parents and facilitators at least once each semester and in reports sent twice per school year. Facilitators will contact parents if concerns or actions of special note occur. Parents need to inform facilitators of any changes in a child's life that might affect their performance in the learning community.

Assessments

The Volo approach to education endeavors to help young people understand their talents and the world around them. Volo education values and fosters understanding, skills, and attitudes in a wide array of areas. Academic, or subject-specific, learning is only a part of Volo education. In the wide array of integrated areas for development, it is essential to

know how students are learning and to track progress; this is crucial for personalized learning plans. At Volo, student progress is regularly assessed and tracked to demonstrate growth, assist with learning plans, and to provide support as needed.

Facilitators will assess student progress, comprehension, enthusiasm, interest, and fluency through observation and conferences. Written and oral evaluations will also be used, although they might not be labeled as quizzes or assessments.

A portfolio of student work is collected over the year as evidence of learning, discussed with the student, shared with parents during conferences, and sent home at the end of the year.

Standardized Tests

Standardized tests present complex issues, both positive and negative. Standardized tests are not required at Volo, nor is Volo required to administer Utah's standardized tests. However, participation in a standardized assessment process is recommended, with assessments at the beginning of the year, mid-year, and at the end of the year. Volo staff will work with families interested in participating in standardized assessments to identify and incorporate quality tests for the group of interested participants. Examples of potential candidate assessments include Basic Achievement Skills Inventory, California Achievement Test/Terra Nova, Classic Learning Test, Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, and the Stanford Achievement Test.

Report Cards

Report cards at Volo take the form of written reports; they do not include traditional letter or numerical grades. Mid-year reports are sent in January; end-of-year reports in June. Reports will contain a written summary of the child's progress, including highlights, and will accompany a portfolio of the student's work.

DAILY SCHEDULE

The following schedule will remain somewhat flexible and adaptable. We will adapt to the needs of the students while maintaining consistency and a predictable daily rhythm.

Monday through Thursday

- 8:30 – 9:00 Gather
- 9:00 – 9:30 Morning Circle
- 9:30 – 10:30 Math and Language Arts
- 10:30 – 12:00 Block Activities
- 12:00 – 12:30 Lunch
- 12:30 – 1:00 Play Time
- 1:00 – 1:30 Classes
- 1:30 – 2:00 Afternoon Activities

Friday

- 8:30 – 9:00 Gather
- 9:00 – 9:15 Morning Circle
- 9:15 – 1:30 Activities (exploring, projects, special focus learning experiences, etc.). On many Fridays, an older group (ages 11 – 15) will spend time with Arthur Morris, while the younger group (ages 7 – 10) spend time with other facilitators on other activities.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:30	Gather				
9:00	Morning Circle & Music				Adventure, Exploration, Projects
9:30	Math	Language	Math	Language	
10:00		Arts		Arts	
10:30	Block				
11:00					
11:30					
12:00	Lunch				
12:30	Play				
13:00	Class A	Class B	Class A	Class B	
13:30	Stations & Mentors				
14:00					
14:30	(After School Program TBD)				
15:00					
15:30					
16:00					

Attendance

Attendance will be recorded daily. Volo's goal is to nurture a love for learning and to enable them to be successful, responsible members of society. Because of Volo learning activities' experiential, hands-on, responsive nature, many educational opportunities cannot be duplicated or repeated. Further, learning plans purposefully include progressions that build on prior experiences, so the entire activity is important.

Attendance is important. Parents are expected to take a proactive role in assuring their children attend Volo when enrolled. We recommend families plan their vacation schedule around the Volo calendar. When possible, medical and dental appointments should occur outside Volo hours, and parents should notify Volo before any absence.

Timeliness

Volo's days are purposefully structured. Morning and afternoon activities are part of the learning progression and are thoughtfully planned and incorporated into pedagogical choices. Additionally, Volo staff and volunteers must be appropriately present when students are present. Students should arrive between 8:30 AM and 9:00 AM. We gather promptly at 9:00 AM. It will be disruptive for any students to arrive after 9:00 AM. The school day ends at 2:00 PM. All children should be picked up by 2:10 PM unless prior arrangements have been made. Parents who have not made arrangements to help or participate in a tour should not linger during the beginning of the day or arrive before the end of the day, as noted in the Family Participation Form.

Attendance Requirements

Regular, timely attendance will be best for the student and the learning community. Consistency and predictability are very important for young people and the group. Consistent absences or tardiness may result in unenrollment.

Homework

Volo intends to support learning as a life-worthy skill. We expect that learning will occur at home and Volo. We assume that young people are engaged meaningfully in their families and other activities. Volo will minimize sending assignments home, while confidently assuming that students will choose to continue learning at home and that families will support them. At Volo, the role of school-assigned homework changes with the education of the person and can be roughly correlated with age.

Young people ages 7-9 do not typically receive regularly assigned homework. Practice and repetition in math and other subjects are built into the daily schedule. Additional practice and repetition may be needed; those cases will be discussed with parents as needed. There may also be infrequent projects that depend on work or research at home. For ages 10 to about 13, the interests of the young person and increasingly complex ideas

may include assignments to be done at home a few times per week; these may include math practice (especially hands-on), nightly reading, journaling, working on a project, book projects, etc. For ages 14 and above, learning activities at home become more important for growing fluency and mastering advanced concepts and skills.

Pets

Pets should not be brought to Volo unless previously arranged.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Families are a crucial part of building the Volo learning community. There are many ways that parents can get involved in the learning community life and culture.

Families are asked to contribute in a variety of ways to Volo. We set annual goals for volunteer hours, in-kind donations, and fund-raising, and encourage every family to participate, as possible. Details on volunteer opportunities are available in our Parental Involvement Policy and on the school's website.

Volo is a homeschool cooperative. This means that the learning community collaborates and participates together in furthering Volo's vision and mission. Parents are invited to participate and contribute as they can. There are no formal requirements for family participation; however, families are encouraged to help if they can. The following practices have been established

1. Volo will convene an annual meeting to inform participating families and provide opportunities to take an active role in appropriate governance.
2. Volo will offer a flexible number of meetings for families, such as meetings in the morning or evening, or will allow parents to participate remotely, as requested, to keep families informed and to receive their governance input.
3. Volo involves parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way, in the planning, review, and improvement of programs; this policy will be reviewed annually by the governing board.
4. Volo will involve individual families periodically and flexibly during the year in meetings to discuss student progress, needs, opportunities, and successes. Several days have been set aside in the calendar for these meetings; alternative or additional times may be scheduled if needed.

The following are some opportunities for families to be involved:

- Lead a class or workshop series twice weekly in the afternoon
- Host an interest station twice weekly in the afternoon (fishing, woodworking, robotics, etc.)

- Mentor one or more students; meet with them at least once weekly.
- Help with administrative tasks (non-financial)
- Be a facilitator on a part-time or full-time basis
- Accompany field trips and outings as needed
- Help with marketing
- Help with fundraising
- Help with Social media
- Consult and counsel on organizational development
- Participate in the family council

Volunteer and Observation Guidelines

Volo has important guidelines for visiting to observe and/or to volunteer; these are found in the Volunteer and Observation Guidelines form.

CODE OF CONDUCT

All young people, staff, family members, and any others at Volo will conduct themselves in a manner that contributes to a productive, safe, happy, inviting learning environment for all. Everyone is expected to be kind, respectful, attentive, and cooperative with others in the school community.

Students will be on time and ready to participate each day. They will be dressed appropriately for outdoor activities each day. Students will demonstrate respect and care in their use of Volo property and resources, including following rules for electronic devices. Young people will not bring to school nor use any harmful or illegal items or substances. Young people will not bring to school pocket knives, weapons, or fire-making devices.

Students who engage in dangerous or disruptive conduct that disturbs the learning of others, disrespects others, threatens or harms others, damages property, or violates Volo policies and procedures shall be subject to discipline including potential suspension or expulsion. See also the Safe Community Policy.

STUDENT HEALTH

Health and well-being are important at Volo. Active learning with outdoor time increases the risks of bangs, scrapes, bumps, etc. Volo staff takes safety seriously and also recognizes the benefits of potentially risky activities that may not be allowed in other school settings. Parents are advised to communicate any concerns or questions to Volo facilitators so that issues can be resolved before potentially risky activities occur.

Emergencies

Volo facilitators are trained in emergency first aid; however, they are not medical professionals. Initially, Volo will not have a medical professional on-site.

Volo Staff will attempt to take care of minor issues (like needing a band-aid) themselves. Vomiting, fever, apparently minor head injury, unusual dizziness, extreme fatigue, diarrhea, or other serious but non-immediately-life-threatening issues that arise during the day will require immediate pickup by parents. Parents will be immediately notified of any serious issues that require attention at a medical clinic or facility. Care for the student is the highest priority and will proceed as needed, per the Parental Consent and Release Form.

Illness Guidelines

A child exhibiting any of the following symptoms should be kept at home to recover and prevent the spread of illness:

- Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Head lice
- Fever of 100.4 or higher
- Infectious rash
- Severe cough
- Pink eye (infection)
- Infectious runny nose
- Communicable illness. If a child is diagnosed with a serious communicable illness such as anything for which children can be vaccinated, please let Volo know as soon as possible. A doctor's note granting permission may be required for the child to return to school. Failure to comply with this policy may result in the child being asked to leave school until such a note is produced.

Additional Considerations

Some communicable illnesses can be prevented or moderated by appropriate individual and social practices. Volo will comply with all local regulations for preventing the spread of communicable diseases. We will incorporate the best science available and provide as

much latitude as possible for personal choice while remaining sensitive to the needs of each member of the community.

Head lice

It is important to check your children regularly for lice. If you find even a single nit, please keep your child at home. Immediately notify a Volo facilitator.

Health Plans

Students requiring on-going medical attention or considerations will have a health plan developed by their doctor. Facilitators are expected to review and follow health plans and assist in ensuring the needs of students are met during the school day.

Medical Recommendations

Facilitators will not provide medical advice or recommendations to parents. Facilitators will state observations and share information, but will not counsel parents or give advice on seeking services, medications, therapies, or other healthcare services. Further, parents will not counsel or advise facilitators how to care for the health of other people's children.

Safety Policy

The safety and well-being of every participant is crucial to the warm, respectful, empathetic, creative Volo learning environment. Volo will strive to ensure as far as possible the health, safety, and well-being of all participants. There are many aspects of an emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually safe school.

Safe Student Conduct

Volo recognizes the intent and principles of the safe schools policy of the State of Utah (<https://www.utah.gov/pmn/files/407593.pdf>)

Parent Consent & Release

Volo activities potentially include transporting participants, dealing with unforeseen circumstances, and coping with unexpected medical conditions. Volo strives to meet high standards for preparedness. Volo's Parent Consent and Release Form must be completed at least once annually for every participant.

Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting

Utah law requires that whenever any person, including any school employee, contracted or temporary employee, or volunteer who has reason to believe that a child has been subjected to incest, molestation, sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect, he or she shall immediately notify the nearest police officer, law enforcement agency, or the Division of Child Family Service. The law provides serious penalties for failure to fulfill one's duty to report.

WELLNESS

Vision

Volo is a community committed to the healthy growth and development of young people. Health includes physical, emotional, and social realms. Volo is committed to creating a healthy community where young people develop physically, emotionally, and socially. Diet, activity, sleep, and play are all important components of the learning program.

Food Guidelines

Nourishing our bodies provides important benefits. We encourage home-grown, home-prepared food, nutrient-dense food, and food that is free from artificial additives. Candy, soda, desserts, and other foods high in sugar or caffeine are discouraged in school lunches or snacks. Students are discouraged from bringing candy for snacks or treats.

Snacks

Volo will provide nutrient-dense, whole-food snacks such as granola bars, carrots, and apples.

Lunches

Students are asked to bring a lunch every day. Volo will not provide lunches. We ask that lunches include healthy, substantive items including fruits and vegetables. Because dietary needs and desires vary, we ask that children do not share their lunches with each other unless specific permission is given by families.

Birthdays

Volo recognizes the importance of acknowledging and celebrating student birthdays. Volo would like to actively share in the joy and wonder of each child's life and individuality by learning about the events in his/her life, including family members, friendships, and favorite activities, rather than focusing on foods or trinkets that a child may bring for a party. Participation in any such classroom

birthday recognition or any related celebration activities are completely optional choice for each student.

To protect the health and safety of students, eliminate the financial burden on families, protect the educational learning time in classrooms, and respect the rights of parents in choosing what their children consume while at school, Volo's approach to birthdays focuses on the essence and uniqueness of each child. Social and personal growth is encouraged via the sharing of student life/histories/timelines, favorite books, and/or hobbies.

Integrating Physical Activity

At Volo physical activity and movement are a normal part of our curriculum. We encourage regular physical activity as a personal behavior that students need opportunities for physical activity throughout the day and combined with learning. Physical activity is combined with subject lessons and in between lessons. Movement is used as a regular part of academic instruction to promote deeper learning and memory. Part of this process includes regular classes in movement, games, and/or dance.

Free Play

Free play is crucial for development. During free play, children have the freedom to play energetically or quietly. They tend to have a yearning for what it is they need and will seek it out. This is what we want but, of course, we also want to minimize dangers and prevent mishaps. When we need to redirect an activity we try to state the positive choice first. For instance, a young person can hop on the stumps but not with long poles in their hands. They can run as long as they want but not climb the rocky cliff. They can dig mines but not make clouds of dust for others to breathe. They can carry rocks but not shatter or throw them.

The children need to converse with their peers, make rules and change rules, test agreements, and even break them sometimes. They are learning to get along, and natural consequences are great teachers! But as with physical safety, we like to have a sense of the general nature of their play so we can nudge the direction a bit if we see a problem coming. Occasionally we need to intervene and make changes abruptly. Always the intent is to move away from coercion and back toward cooperation, away from stalemates and back towards sharing and listening. While staying aware of the overall activity, we are watchful for any escalating disagreements, for any behavior that seems unusual or inappropriate, and for any children who seem unhappy or anxious.

Inclusion

Everyone is always welcome to join another group at play. Of course, a game in

progress might not be appropriate to join. Generally, we encourage children not to rely on grownups for company during free play. Adults typically participate to keep things moving, or to encourage a lone child to find another child to play with (giving the child suggestions like “you could ask - - - how they are feeling, or what is their favorite thing to do at recess, or if they’d like to build something with you.”) We do this gently and let it go if they resist.

Accepting Change

Children are encouraged to problem-solve on their own unless it becomes a question of safety. We encourage young people to accept changes in the direction of play in a group and to be easygoing enough to find something else to do if they no longer like the game, rather than demanding their way. Similarly, one child should not be allowed to insist on a change in play for all the others.

Sharing Resources

Materials and forts are not “owned” from one play time to the next, though the children are encouraged to be respectful of things like others’ miniature fairy house creations. Children need to practice courteous manners with each other when working out how to share things. They often need some assistance with this.

Physical & Emotional Well Being

Children should always be free to move. If they play horses the reins must be loose, if in jail they must be able to flee easily! The only contact allowed is a light tap on the shoulder, back, or hip when playing tag. Tackling or wrestling of any kind is not allowed. There is no violent play allowed.

Aggressive, threatening, or taunting behavior of any kind will not be allowed at Volo. Students engaged in behavior that may negatively affect another student will be redirected to another activity, including assisting a facilitator, check-in and stay, or check-in and go.

Students are required to remain within the boundaries of the play area as defined by the facilitators, which includes remaining within sight of the facilitators during any outdoor activity.

Family Rhythms

Families can enhance the educational experience of their children is by understanding the rhythms of the day. Children flourish in environments that are loving, orderly, and predictable. With an external sense of order and routine, children feel comfortable living in the moment.

Just knowing what is expected at different intervals in the day can help children feel secure in the world. As an example, a bedtime ritual can help to calm and soothe children and prepare them for restful sleep. Once this routine is

established, the ritual may become parents' most treasured time with their children. These other home activities support the work of the school:

- Regular bedtime that allows 10-12 hours of sleep
- Eating a healthy protein-rich breakfast consisting of whole foods and minimal sugar
- Reading to your child daily
- Practicing math daily and with a happy, curious attitude
- Household or yard chores
- Outdoor play
- Gardening
- Indoor creative play
- Hobbies
- Artistic and musical endeavors
- Cooking
- Nature hikes and walks
- Picnics
- Community or religious activities
- Volunteer or community projects
- Providing a quiet, uncluttered space and time set aside for math, reading, writing, and creating artwork.

FAMILY – YOUNG PERSON- VOLO LEARNING COMPACT

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

I recognize that my involvement and support as a parent is critical to my child's development at Volo, therefore I will:

- Make certain my child attends regularly, properly dressed for the weather, and on time.
- See that my child is well-rested and has breakfast each day, brings a nutritious snack and lunch or participates in the school lunch program.
- Attend my child's parent teacher conferences, annual meetings, and other school functions to deepen my understanding of Volo education and what is happening in the classroom.
- Follow Volo's Healthy Communication Guidelines in discussing my concerns and seeking information regarding my child's education.
- Maintain proper discipline to support the school and staff.
- Work towards a rhythm and schedule at home that promotes regular sleep, eating, and chore times.
- Limit my child's exposure to screen time and media.
- Read with my child and let him/her see me read regularly.
- Do math with my child and let him/her see me doing math regularly.

- Encourage positive attitudes toward learning and Volo.
- Understand that Volo requests that parents/guardians participate in the learning community through volunteer work and donations. I will participate as a volunteer to the extent that I can, if I am able.
- Review information and work sent home and respond as necessary.

Student Responsibilities

I recognize I am ultimately in charge of my own learning and that learning is my choice, therefore I will:

- Attend Volo regularly and on time.
- Be where I am supposed to be.
- Follow directions given by my teacher and other school staff.
- Strive to do my best each day.
- Bring and choose to eat healthy and nutritious foods throughout the day.
- Be responsible for my learning by asking questions, participating in discussions, trying to learn.
- Cooperatively work with my peers and be a good friend to all.
- Use my words and my deeds to do good each day for myself and others.
- Follow all Volo rules, including having appropriate clothing for the weather and following media guidelines.
- Help to take care of Volo's places through chores and thoughtful actions.

Facilitator Responsibilities

I recognize my role in promoting and inspiring the learning and safety of every young person. I will:

- Hold expectations high for all students, believing that all students can learn.
- Provide high-quality instruction and challenge students to critical thinking.
- Create a rigorous and stimulating learning environment that encourages students to become self-motivated learners.
- Communicate regularly with families.
- Provide opportunities for parents to assist in meaningful ways.
- Create a rhythm and expectations that help students to feel safe and clear about Volo expectations and norms.
- Collaborate with my colleagues and parents to provide accommodations and supports, as needed, for individual student learning.
- Foster a positive and collaborative community for all teachers, parents, and students.

Administrative Responsibilities

I recognize my role in creating a positive and supportive learning environment for all students therefore I will:

- Provide an equitable learning environment for all children.
- Encourage the sharing of information about the school curriculum, culture, and practices with all parents.
- Encourage positive communication with parents and faculty.
- Create forms and processes for collaboration around student needs and concerns, including using the Three Streams of Student Support processes.
- Ensure that parent teacher conferences, Back to School Nights, parent orientations, parent enrichment, festivals and events and regular reports are scheduled into the school year.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for professional development to staff members.

TUITION & FEES

Full Time (FT) Exploratory (Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu)

Item	Description	Deadline	Amount
Tuition, regular	Advertised tuition	July 19, 2024. 11:59 PM	\$15,000.00
Tuition, term installments	10% fee if pay for 3-month term	July 19; Nov 9; Feb 14	\$5,500 / term (\$16,500 total)
Tuition, UFA Scholarship	UFA scholarship (\$8,000) + \$4,000	July 19, 2024	\$12,000
Buddy Plan	Tuition reduction for referrals or joining from a referral	July 19, 2024	Subtract \$2,000 for up to two referrals; subtract \$2,000 if you were a referral.
Sibling Tuition Relief	Tuition reductions for additional siblings	July 19, 2024	Subtract 10% for the second sibling; 12% for additional siblings
Minimum	Minimum tuition after all adjustments	July 19, 2024	\$8,000

Part Time (PT) Exploratory (Tue & Thu)

Item	Description	Deadline	Amount
Tuition, regular	Advertised tuition	July 19, 2024. 11:59 PM	\$8,000.00
Tuition, term installments	10% fee if pay by term	July 19; Nov 9; Feb 14	\$2,933.33 / term (\$8,799.99 total)
Buddy Plan	No referral discount	na	na
Sibling discount	10% discount for each additional sibling	July 19, 2024	Subtract 10% for additional siblings

Fridays

Item	Description	Deadline	Amount
Tuition, regular	Advertised tuition	July 19, 2024. 11:59 PM	\$4,5000.00
Tuition, term installments	No additional fee	July 19; Nov 9; Feb 14	\$1,500 / term (\$4,500 total)
Tuition, Add-on Full-time	Added to FT Exploratory	July 19	\$750/term (\$2,250 total)
Tuition, Add-on Part-time	Added to PT Exploratory	July 19	\$1,000/term (\$3,000 total)
Discounts	No referral or sibling discounts	na	na

Tuition and Fees Refund Policy

Volo depends on tuition and fees to operate. Volo requires money in the bank for budgets and contractual commitments including insurance. Tuition and fees are not refundable. If you withdraw, the remaining pro-rated balance may be qualified as a charitable contribution.

Late Payment Policy

Payments delivered after the due date will be assessed a 10% late fee.

Tuition Assistance

Tuition assistance may be possible, based on financial need. Applications may be available. Reasonable applications will be reviewed by the Tuition Committee of the Governing Board and the Executive Director. Contact arthur.morris@yovolo.org.

Additional Fees

A membership fee of \$10.00 annually is requested from every participating family. Additional fees may be requested to offset the costs for supplies, programs, or special outings.

DONATIONS

Donations are invited and welcome. Any donations in addition to tuition and fees are tax deductible. Volo depends on donations to augment its tuition income. Donations go toward operating costs, equipment, and supplies. Any tuition assistance depends on donations from others; this helps Volo be available to as many children as possible.

Funding Volo

The board desires to protect students, parents, Volo employees, and administrators from funding restrictions or influences that are coercive, distracting, or disruptive to the educational processes; over-commercialized; threatening to the health and welfare of students; or lacking in educational merit. Volo is committed to the appropriate distribution of unrestricted funds and the management of funds to ensure the educational opportunities for all students are equitable and fair. Volo retains the sole right to allocate, restrict, or redirect funds or other resources. Conveyance to Volo of any funds, service, property for tuition, fees, donations, sponsorships, or any other purpose is a contribution; contributions will only be accepted where there is no expectation or promise, express or implied, of remuneration or any undue influence or special consideration.

For reference, Volo has an important Donations and Funds policy, available upon request.