

**Orchard STEM School**

Family Handbook

Updated 3/31/2026

## Contact Information

Location: Openshaw Acres  
Santaquin, UT 84655

General Inquiries: [Welcome@OrchardSTEM.org](mailto:Welcome@OrchardSTEM.org)

Director: Todd Hepworth

Phone: 385-600-8080

## Philosophy

Orchard STEM School is the first nonprofit K-6 school in Santaquin City. Orchard STEM School is a learner-centered school located in a working orchard in Santaquin, Utah. At Orchard STEM, we believe that students are the most important stakeholders in their own education. Four cornerstones anchor our educational foundation: Choice, Creativity, Competence, & Community.

## Our Administrative Team



### **Dr. Lori Openshaw – Co-Founder and Board President**

Lori, a co-founder and Board President of Orchard STEM School, has a PhD in Engineering Education and has spent over 10 years teaching and implementing early STEM programs. In addition, Lori has trained in nature-based education approaches. She has incorporated her knowledge of STEM education with principles of nature-based learning to create the underlying philosophy and structure of Orchard STEM School. Lori co-founded Orchard STEM School in 2023.



### **Todd Hepworth, M.Ed. – Co-Founder and School Director**

Todd, a co-founder and our school director, has a M.Ed. in Educational Leadership and holds professional educator licenses in Utah and Texas. He has worked to create a nurturing, empowering, and developmentally appropriate learning environment at Orchard STEM School. Todd has served as a charter school director (Waldorf based learning), as an elementary school teacher (project-based learning) and as an Air Force officer. He currently serves on the state board of

the Utah Association for the Education of Young Children. Todd co-founded Orchard STEM School in 2023.

## Calendar

Our school year begins the day after Labor Day and follows the Nebo District Calendar for most holidays and closures.

### Orchard STEM School 2026-2027 Academic Calendar



September 26						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

No school  
 School activity

October 26						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

November 26						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

December 26						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

January 27						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

February 27						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

March 27						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

April 27						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

May 27						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

### Events

Sep 8	First day of school
Sep 7	Labor Day - no school
Oct 14-15	Fall Break
Nov 5	Term 1 Ends
Nov 19	Parent Teacher Conf.
Nov 23-26	Thanksgiving Break
Dec 17-Jan 3	Winter Break
Jan 18	Martin Luther King Day
Jan 21	Term 2 Ends
Feb 15-18	President's Day Break
Mar 1	Parent Teacher Conf.
Mar 25	Term 3 Ends
Apr 5-8	Spring Break
May 27	Last Day of School

## Daily Schedule

Monday - Thursday	9:00 – 3:00
Friday	Independent and family learning

\*All schedules are flexible and subject to change

8:55	Arrival
9:00	Morning Meeting and planning
9:30	Academic instruction time (usually in pavilions), break included
11:30	Lunch and free-play time
12:30	Project-based learning time, break included
2:30	Afternoon meeting and review
3:00	Dismissal

## Payment

Payment is processed through our secure portal, Omella. Payments can be made as an ACH transfer or by credit card. Credit card payments have a processing fee to be paid by the family. Payments are due one month prior to the start of the next Term (for example, tuition for Term 1 is due on August 8).

A late fee of \$50 will be incurred on the 3rd day after payment is not received. If payment is not completed by the 5th day, the child's enrollment will end immediately. If you would like to re-enroll your child, you will be required to pay the tuition-in-full payment for the remainder of the year.

## Curriculum and Lesson Plans

At Orchard STEM School, students are the most important stakeholders in their own education. Students and teachers work together to create learning goals, determine which topics we use for projects, design learning activities, assess mastery, and evaluate progress.

We reference standards from the following professional educator associations to ensure our students master the knowledge and skills they need to successfully continue their education when they graduate from Orchard STEM School:

National Science Teachers Association (NSTA)  
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)  
National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)  
National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

## Field Trips

Developmentally appropriate field trips are fun and help to enrich the children's learning experiences. All children must have signed permission from their parents or guardians in order to participate in field trips which require travel outside of the local community.

Parents are encouraged to chaperone field trips. Parents will not be allowed to be alone with children other than their own at any time. This means that while on a field trip where you are allowed to freely explore, a teacher or assistant must be with each group of parents.

Everyone will walk on sidewalks and use crosswalks when available. Adults will be positioned at the front and back of the groups to maintain safety. The teachers, director, and parent/guardian chaperones are responsible for the supervision of the children at all times while on the field trip.

## Animal Visitors

At Orchard STEM School, animal visitors and class pets are welcomed and highly encouraged, as they give children a hands-on experience of learning respect, care, physical characteristics, behaviors, and safe practices associated with different species.

Before inviting any animal or obtaining a class pet, the teachers will inform the families in writing that an animal will be visiting or living at the school.

Depending on the animal visiting or the class pet, it must be up to date on all required vaccinations, disease-free, friendly and comfortable around young children, and, depending on the animal, supervised at all times. If the animal is a reptile, amphibian, or livestock, children will wash their hands with soap and water immediately after touching/feeding the animal.

Children will not be asked to clean up any animal dropping, cages, or pens. If the animal does poop or pee, staff will clean up the excrement with disposable gloves and disinfectant or soap/water, as soon as possible.

## Arrival and Dismissal

Children may be dropped off by anyone, but must be picked up by an authorized individual as indicated on the child's enrollment form. Individuals may be required to show photo identification before the school releases a child.

### Arrival Procedure

Arrival begins at 8:50 am.

### Dismissal Procedure

School personnel will release children to be picked up. Late pick-up fees will begin promptly 10 minutes after the school day ends.

### Late Arrival & Late Pick-up

Drop-off/Check-in will end promptly at 9:00 am. We may be on our morning learning walk and can provide directions for drop off if we are out of the classroom.

Please do not be late to pick-up. Teachers have other duties to attend to and need to close the school at the end of the day. Additionally, if you are late, your child may feel worried and uncomfortable. Late pick-up will result in a \$10 fee after 10 minutes. In the event that a child has not been picked up 15 minutes after the end of class, we will call you. If we are unsuccessful, we will call your emergency contacts.

## Authorization to Release Child

We will only release your child to those individuals listed on the enrollment form and we may ask for ID. We will NOT release a child without written permission - or verbal permission in the case of emergency. To verify your identity over the phone, staff will call your number listed on the application.

## Legal Custody

Orchard STEM School cannot refuse to release a child to the child's parent or legal guardian who has or shares legal custody of the child. In most cases, both parents have equal custody rights, unless a court or valid written separation agreement proves otherwise. If you are experiencing custody difficulties, we strongly urge you to keep the school's director fully advised of circumstances that affect your child and their drop off and pick-up routines.

## Volunteering

Having parents/guardians in the classroom helps create stability and continuity for your child, gives you ideas for things to follow-up with at home, and creates a sense of community as you get to know the other children and parents. Each month, we will send a sign-up via Band for you to choose which days and times you can volunteer. Volunteer hours must be scheduled in advance.

## Communication

Communication is a critical component of a quality program. We use the Band App for messaging, updates, photos, alerts, and announcements. Parents are encouraged to contact the teachers or administration team with any questions or concerns as they arise. Parents must have a working email address and phone number.

Sharing information is not always easy since parents and teachers are busy. If you have a concern or special insight that would help us with your child, please try to visit with your child's teacher or send a message through Band. This will make things go smoother for your child, you, and the school.

## Behavior

### Discipline/Behavior Guidance

The word 'discipline' comes from the latin word "diciplina" which means instruction or teaching. Positive guidance is rooted in teaching appropriate behaviors to children and helping them understand the consequences of their actions. We proactively teach consequences of actions and empathy for others. We help the child communicate all emotions and redirect the child to another activity when there is a conflict. If a child is harming themselves or other children, we will immediately remove the child from the situation. In order to keep a child from hurting themselves or others, we may need to use physical interventions, such as momentarily restraining a child or moving them to a different play space.

## Aggressive Behavior Policy

At Orchard STEM School we strive for an inclusive learning environment for all children. We understand that children are learning boundaries with others and we regularly model appropriate behavior and redirect these misguided behaviors. There may be times that a child is overtly aggressive toward teachers or other children. To proactively address these instances and to keep others safe, we will take the following steps:

1. The first instance of an overtly aggressive behavior (causing an injury with a mark on themselves or others, destroying property, or an uncontrolled verbal attack), we will alert the parent in writing.
2. After the second instance, we will alert the parent in writing and schedule a parent-teacher conference where we will create a behavior improvement plan.
3. If the child continues to have aggressive behavior after the behavior improvement plan has been implemented, then the child will be disenrolled without the current month's refund.

## Behavior Concerns

If a child's teacher notices a pattern of behaviors which is outside of the norm of development, they will alert the parents about the behaviors and will keep notes. These notes will cover what the behavior is, when it is happening, what triggered it, and how long it took to return to the group. Teachers will take these notes over the course of a week then meet with the parent to discuss next steps or if outside intervention is needed.

## Transitional Objects

We know that school can be a worrisome place for children if they are not used to the environment without their parent/guardian present. It is normal for children at this age to attach to a special item (blanket, stuffed toy – also known as a transitional object). This object is welcome at school, but it must be labeled with the child's first and last name and it must stay in their cubby during school hours so they know where to find it when they need a snuggle. It is not the responsibility of the staff or school to keep track of the transitional item.

## Health

### Clothing

Orchard STEM School uses a partially indoor/outdoor classroom – we aim to spend our entire day outside. We will be outdoors year-round – rain, snow, or shine. Dress your child appropriately for the weather (check the forecast before school). Please dress your child in comfortable clothing that can get dirty or wet. Please pull hair back out of the child's eyes. Some clothing will need to be left at the classroom. Please refer to 'What to Bring to School' section.

## Illness

We would like to reduce the spread of illness, so please keep your child home if they are ill. Your child is welcome back to school if they meet the following criteria for at least 24 hours after illness:

- No green or yellow mucus
- No fever above 101 degrees
- No vomiting
- No diarrhea
- No persistent cough that interferes with breathing or regular physical activity

## Extreme Weather/Air Quality

We follow NOA guidelines to determine if the temperatures are safe for children to play outdoors. We may remain indoors when temperatures are below 25 degrees. Teachers are trained to pay attention to the weather and signs from the children to make sure children stay safe outdoors. During Green, Yellow, and Orange air quality days we will have outdoor activity as usual. For Red air quality and above, we may remain indoors.

## Toilet Competence

We do not accept children that are not yet competent using the toilet. We understand that children need individualized approaches when learning how to use the toilet. However, using the toilet independently is a critical skill in an outdoor school and staff is not available to assist in toileting.

## Safety

Every effort is made to keep your child safe; however, children are likely to acquire bumps, bruises, and scratches during their early years. We will fill out an incident report for each incident, accident, or injury that is seen or reported to us. The report is initially completed by the teacher, then signed by the parent/guardian upon pick-up. If the injury is serious, you will be notified by phone. If, in the opinion of Orchard STEM School's staff on duty, the injury warrants emergency treatment, an ambulance will be called and your child will be taken to the nearest medical facility. You will then be notified immediately. Parents/guardians will be responsible for any costs incurred due to any emergency treatment.

## Allegations of Abuse or Neglect

All staff are mandated reporters and shall report suspected child abuse or neglect. The report shall be made to the school director IMMEDIATELY. The Director shall gather information to report the suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Social Services. The Director will report to the Board. Any person who witnesses or suspects that a child has been subjected to abuse, neglect, or exploitation shall immediately notify Child Protective Services or law

enforcement. The school staff shall cooperate in all investigations of abuse and neglect. Staff may discuss the report with families after the report has been made.

## Background checks/Name tag

All teachers and staff will have current background checks. All visitors and volunteers are required to check-in and wear a name tag. No visitor or volunteer is allowed alone with a child. Law enforcement personnel are exempt as long as they have correct identification.

## Diversity/Inclusion

We welcome every opportunity to expand the children's view of the world as a place rich in many cultures, races, religions, and customs. Orchard STEM School is open to all families, regardless of ethnicity, religion, ability, and sexual orientation. We will work with families to provide an inclusive school environment for all children. Diversity extends to the family structure as well, and we are committed to the philosophy of treating all family situations equally and without bias. Orchard STEM School is a non-denominational program. We encourage you to share your family's traditions with our children and staff.

## Holidays

Holidays are a joyous time for celebration. In addition to celebrating traditional holidays (Halloween, Christmas, etc), we will focus on the seasons and celebrate the changes we see in nature. We respect children's enthusiasm for sharing their thoughts with us about holidays!

## Birthdays

Birthdays are a wonderful milestone for children and we will find a special time either on or around your child's birthday to celebrate them as an individual. If you want to bring something to give to the class, please consider a hand-drawn picture, craft, book, or edible treats.

## Special Needs

Some children have special needs that require unique adaptation or attention by staff and teachers. We welcome children with all abilities, backgrounds, and medical situations. If your child has special needs or circumstances, please consult with the Director to construct an individualized care plan. If the care your child needs warrants regular, one-on-one help from an adult, the parent will be asked to pay a fee to cover the cost of extra staff.

## Confidentiality

All records provided regarding your child and family are confidential. We also ask that you respect this confidentiality by not asking staff to discuss your child or other children outside of the school. We encourage you to bring up student and school issues with the Director. Exceptions to the confidentiality rule are emergency personnel.

## Grievance and Dismissal

Orchard STEM School administration and staff are committed to maintaining an open door, open-forum approach to problem solving and conflict resolution. If a family has a concern regarding the behavior of a teacher, the concern should be discussed with the director or the Board. If there is a family or child that is a concern to the program, we will do our best to discuss and solve concerns with the family through phone calls, emails, or in-person meetings. If, at any time, in the opinion of the Director of Orchard STEM School, continued enrollment of a child in the program is deemed detrimental to the child's health, progress, or to other children's health or progress, or for any other reason at the discretion of the Director, he/she may be dismissed from the program, with a refund according to the refund policy.

## What to Bring to School:

Required - These will stay at school:

- Sunscreen
- Sun Hat
- Medications - if needed
- Extra change of clothes (shorts, shirt, underwear) in a gallon size ziploc bag, with another empty, labeled ziploc bag inside for sending dirty clothes home.
- LABEL EVERYTHING WITH FIRST AND LAST NAME

## What to Bring to School Each Day:

- Dressed for the weather. We recommend UV protective clothing such as a long sleeve sun shirt and board shorts as they help keep the child safe from the sun and they dry quicker than regular clothes when we encounter mud and water. Wear shoes that won't slip off and are waterproof. On a rainy day, Raincoat, rainboots, waterproof suit or pants. Cold winter days call for layers - we recommend a base layer (thermal or wool), long sleeved shirt, fleece pull over or jacket, and a coat. Snow suits may be appropriate depending on your child's preferences and outdoor conditions.
- Two plastic or metal water bottles, already filled with water, labeled with the child's first and last name.
- Lunch. Please only pack things that your child can open themselves. Better yet, open those and place them directly in the lunch box.

**THANK YOU** for enrolling your child at Orchard STEM School. We look forward to a year of learning adventures!

**Lori Openshaw, Co-founder and President of the Governing Board**  
**Todd Hepworth, Co-founder and School Director**