

Testimonials for Tamarack Waldorf School

“Tamarack is unique in the level of diversity among the families and children here. Most Waldorf schools are more homogenous because of the high cost of receiving a Waldorf education. We place a very high value on our child’s having classmates and friends of all skin colors and social and cultural backgrounds”

“I feel we have a partnership with the school in raising our son. We are not disconnected entities, but instead, different sides of a prism working to create an environment where my son can become the best person he can be”

“We value the safety and security of Tamarack, with its soft, loving environment, strong discipline, and artistic and academic excellence. It’s a beautifully diverse city school with outstanding parental involvement”.

“I have two children attending this school on the Milwaukee's East side. I’m finally happy knowing that both my kids want to get up every morning and go to school.”

“My son has been at Tamarack for the past three years and I would not have him anywhere else in Milwaukee. The teachers and faculty are so loving and caring and stress the importance of community, working together to problem solve, and the natural development of each child. The school body is diverse both ethnically and socioeconomically due to Milwaukee’s Parental Choice Program, which allows more children to have access to a Waldorf education. The emphasis on art, handwork, music, and peaceful conflict resolution makes Tamarack so special.”

“My son has been at Tamarack for the past five years. I've loved most how he continues to garner a strong sense of himself and his important role in our community. As a single parent, I finally I have teachers, staff members and a community who are on my team -- Committed to bringing out the best of who my son authentically is.”

“A complete education for children. Diverse community; accepting and enriching. We drive over 20 minutes each way and won't consider sending our children anywhere else. Warm, caring teachers. Beautiful building. Unique combination that probably can't be found anywhere else in the country. I knew Tamarack would be great for the kids, I didn't realize how good it would be for me as a parent!”

“I have two children at Tamarack, thanks to the Parental Choice Program. This is an outstanding school where the teachers love and respect each child and treat them accordingly. The school environment is calm, peaceful and beautiful. Children realize their full potential here, as whole human beings. “

“Tamarack School embodies our values. The school emphasizes healthy relationships, understanding the importance of the teacher/student bond. The teacher moves up a grade each year, with the class, serving almost as a third parent who guides the child through all the stages of development. In this sometimes challenging relationship, the teacher makes a deep commitment to each student to see them through thick and thin. The relationships among the students are also very important. The children stay together all the way through eighth grade, and the teacher emphasizes care, understanding, and acceptance in the classroom. “

“Tamarack Waldorf School values diversity. We're lucky to have students from an incredibly wide range of racial, geographic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf schools, indicated that among our major tasks in this age is the imperative to create a new society in which people come together to join in important projects, not because of blood ties, but because we are connected on a deeper level. Tamarack is such a meeting place. The parents of children in our school are of many races and ethnicities, work in many different professions, and live all over the region. We have dancers, physicians, writers, attorneys, teachers, professors, engineers, business consultants, and everything else. You should see our delicious potlucks! They include comfort foods from many traditions as well as colorful, innovative creations. We come together to support our children in this unusual but profound education. “

A Testimonial by Sandra Gines, Tamarack Parent

I knew Tamarack Community School was the perfect fit for my family the first time I called, more than five years ago. Tamarack is a Waldorf-affiliated school, part of an educational movement that emphasizes age-appropriate learning, high social skills, love of nature and healthy living, and a well-rounded love of learning. Tamarack brings alive a multicultural community spirit; it is a unique combination of naturalistic values in an urban setting.

At the time, my husband and I were new to Milwaukee and primarily interested in filling Max's social needs. Having just had our second baby, Zoe, I thought a pre-kindergarten program two or three mornings a week would be ideal. As I spoke to enrollment coordinator Sarah Stokes on the phone, I found out that Tamarack not only had that option, but that it met many other educational ideals that my husband and I held.

One of our highest priorities was finding a school that recognized the value of play as a tool of real learning. Several trends in American education had already alarmed us. We believe there is a disproportional emphasis on academic performance and grades. Both my husband, an attorney with a Master's degree in Linguistics, and myself, a Ph.D., believe strongly that academic excellence is only one measure of human "success," and that things like emotional maturity, engagement with the world, self-confidence, and love of learning are equally important. We know people who "test" brilliantly, but who are almost unemployable because they can't get along with others. We also know people whose school grades were always somewhat spotty, but who are at the top of their fields, because they have a passion for what they do and the character to see things through. We found to our delight that Tamarack understands how play and imitation form a base for more complex and abstract learning as children develop.

We also object to expectations of homework and reading and writing mastery for very young children. My husband, who has studied language acquisition on the graduate level, believes that early reading and writing instruction does not in the long run benefit literacy and education. People can learn to read at any age, even as adults. What is more important for very young children is mastery over skills that are precursors to reading and writing, such as learning how to learn, imaginative explorations, and being able to work cooperatively. Both of us believe, with strong evidence from our own experiences and studies, that forcing "learning" on anyone, children included, generally fails. Students often either learn to merely perform well, rather than to understand, or they withdraw from school and perform poorly.

Tamarack focuses on eliciting an internal and broad enjoyment of learning, yet it does not neglect excellence in the traditional academic subjects. *(Continued on next page)*

(Sandra Gines testimonial, continued from previous page)

I have friends who have told me tearful stories of struggling with their seven-year-old's nightly homework, or of their children's grade-anxiety, and even of actually doing their children's homework for them out of a desperate desire to prevent "failure." They need to know there is another way. Walking into the beautiful, homey environment of a Tamarack kindergarten, and seeing first-hand the enthusiasm of children who are bright, inquisitive, and enthusiastic, confirmed for us that we were at the right school.

As we have learned more about Tamarack's methods and community values over the years, our commitment has deepened. Tamarack's vision of cultivating successful, whole persons is progressive, but the Waldorf educational movement has an 80-year history of success, melding contemporary values with practical principles of children's flourishing that were born in earlier eras.