

Orcas Center's Arts Education Handbook

Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines

Revised July 2026

→ Register for classes here: orcascenter.ludus.com

Table of Contents:

About this Handbook:	2
Orcas Center's Mission:	2
Class Series Structure:	2
Tuition and Payment Policies:	3
Class Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines:	5
Media Use Statement:	12
Code of Ethics:	12
Code of Conduct:	14
Expectations for Teachers, Directors, and Backstage Volunteers:	16
Revisions and Access to the Handbook:	20

About this Handbook:

This handbook outlines and describes the existing policies, procedures, and guidelines upheld by Orcas Center (OC) for all operations under the Arts Education Program (AEP). This is a living document designed to support students, performers, teachers, volunteers, parents or guardians, and anyone else who collaborates within the framework of Orcas Center. Any class or performance opportunity that exists underneath the AEP should respect and adhere to the guidelines upheld in this handbook.

Orcas Center's Mission:

Orcas Center's core mission is "Fostering access to the arts on Orcas Island". OC is guided by the belief that artistic expression is a human right and an essential service for the wellbeing of our neighbors and ourselves. OC is dedicated to providing accessible programming in a safe and creative space for self exploration, collaboration and personal growth. It is Orcas Center's fiduciary duty to have their programming be guided by this mission, and to keep its classes and performance opportunities within reach.

Class Series Structure:

Orcas Center is home to the Orcas Dance Collective (ODC) and a variety of a la carte educational programming that runs throughout the year. OC also hosts a myriad of camps, intensives, one-off workshops, and large scale productions such as musicals and ballets. All classes and educational programming operate on a case by case basis based on the teachers available.

Many of our classes, but not all, will work towards a public presentation at the end of a class session. End of session presentations can include: invited "informances" in class, small scale productions such as showcases or exhibits, or full scale productions in the black box or center stage theaters. Presentational opportunities vary by class and on a case by case basis.

Classes are typically scheduled in five, six, or eight week blocked "sessions". Large scale productions may run for multiple consecutive months at a time. Class session schedules at OC are determined by teacher availability, room availability, calendar scheduling, and student interest.

Each class is designated for a specific age range. Adult students cannot attend classes designated specifically for children. In a similar light, students under the age limit of an adult course may not attend classes intended only for adult learners. Some classes and workshops may be designated as intergenerational and open to a variety of ages.

Classes for students under 18 years of age follow the Orcas Island Public School calendar and will account for all breaks and holidays dictated in the OISD schedule, unless otherwise noted by the teacher on a case by case basis.

Classes are located at the Orcas Center complex in Eastsound: 817 Mt. Baker Road. The Orcas Dance Collective classes operate out of the Orcas Center as well as Oddfellows Hall: 112 Haven Road.

Registration and Program Descriptions:

→ Register for classes here: orcascenter.ludus.com

Registration for all of our programming is run through Ludus: Orcas Center's Ticketing and Registration System. Informational descriptions for all classes and performance offerings can be found on Ludus. Click the individual widget of the course you are interested in to read about each class.

Students must be registered for a class prior to its starting date. If a student would like to try a class before committing, they are welcome to attend the first class as a trial period before registering. After the trial, the student must be signed up before the next class period begins.

If a class is full, students may join a waitlist. Students and/or families will be notified via email if they or their child has been removed from the waitlist and are able to attend the class.

Tuition and Payment Policies:

Tiered Tuition and Payment Plans:

Orcas Center offers tiered tuition pricing for all of their classes.

Each class is available at four different tuition levels, with the tiers representing the following:

Sponsored B: covers 50% of tuition and class cost

Sponsored A: covers 75% of tuition and class cost

Actual Cost: covers 100% tuition and class cost

Arts Angel: covers 200% of tuition to cover another student in need.

OC also offers payment plans for families who need flexibility. For more information, please contact registrar@orcascenter.org

Payment Policy:

The majority of class payments must be paid in full, per session, and before the class begins. Tuition amount is determined by the total number of classes associated with each course.

Some classes have varied payment structures. For example, The Orcas Dance Collective offers both "drop in passes" for adult learners who need flexibility, as well as "unlimited class memberships" for

those looking to take more than three classes per week. You can check out the class descriptions on Ludus to find out more about each class' payment options.

OC accepts tuition payments via electronic payment in Ludus (preferred), cash, or personal check. Cash or personal check payments (made out to "Orcas Center") can be delivered to the box office during lobby hours, or brought to class and given to the instructor. A 5% credit card fee is applied to your order when paying through Ludus.

Ticketing for Performances and Class-Related Events:

Like class payments, ticketing for performances and class-related events operate under a tiered pricing system. Ticket prices will vary depending on the type of performance, as outlined here.

1) "Informances" held in class: free, donations welcome

3) Middle tier performances, like camps or showcases: tiered ticket prices designed to cover the additional class, rehearsal, and facility time, promotion, technical support, and supplemental costume building or purchases.

3) Large-scale productions, like musicals or ballets: tiered ticket prices to cover even more of the above, plus the rights to scripts, set building and materials, administrative costs, expanded facility use, and increased staff time.

If ticket costs still remain a barrier for you or your family, please contact registrar@orcasceneter.org

Scholarships and Sponsorships:

Orcas Center is dedicated to providing accessible arts opportunities for our community. We are proud to offer a pay-what-you-can class scholarship program for those families who are in deeper need for financial assistance. To inquire about a pay-what-you-can scholarship, please contact registrar@orcasceneter.org.

Orcas Center offers a selective Volunteer Program that accepts in-kind work trade in exchange for class tuition. Volunteer submissions are approved on a case by case basis depending on scholarship availability and Orcas Center production needs. To inquire about volunteer trade, please contact registrar@orcasceneter.org.

Class Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines:

Absence and Makeup Policy:

Orcas Center is responsible for offering make-up classes when a class is canceled due to teacher illness, bad weather, or other extraneous events that may lead to class cancellation. OC will notify students and families via email at least a week in advance of a scheduled make-up class.

There are no makeup classes offered for personal student absences of any kind, for any class.

There are also no makeups offered for any canceled "drop-in" classes where students are paying per class as opposed to a full session in advance. This includes all of Orcas Dance Collective's adult classes.

Class Levels:

In order to better support students' on their creative journey, many of our class offerings are divided into technical levels. Class levels range between level 1 (beginner) to level 5 (professional). Classes that are labeled as "open" are offered for artists training at any level.

Every student under 18 years of age wishing to be placed in an upper level (level 2+) class must be evaluated and approved by an appropriate member of the Teaching Staff in correlation to the class being taken. For example, a student wishing to be placed in a higher level modern dance class would need to be approved by the teacher(s) who instruct modern dance.

Adult learners over 18 years of age may take any adult class at any level based on their own and the teacher's discretion.

OC welcomes artists with all abilities and will provide reasonable accommodations to support their participation, including adaptive techniques and modified instruction.

Level Assessment:

If a class requires a student to be placed in a leveled class, they will need to undergo a level assessment by Orcas Center's teaching staff. Level assessment is based off of the following three principles:

- 1) **Technical Skill:** Teaching Staff may evaluate each artist's skill level if a specific course requires a baseline of technique to participate. Artists wishing to be placed in higher level classes must be practiced and show general comprehension and execution of technical skills associated with each level before moving on. We want to ensure students are completely confident with foundational skills before introducing more complex techniques. This keeps our students safe from injury, reduces frustration, and sets them up for long-term success.

2) **Class Engagement:** Artists who wish to move up to higher levels of classes must not only execute specific technical requirements, but also be able to demonstrate a higher level of class engagement. This includes being focused and motivated during classes; using a growth mindset when facing new challenges (“I can’t...yet”); exhibiting professionalism, and demonstrating a commitment to artistic inquiry and creative expression. Our teachers are here to support and guide students as they build the stamina, curiosity, and professionalism needed for deeper artistic inquiry.

3) **Social Conduct:** It is important that students follow the Code of Ethics and Conduct, as well as all class, rehearsal, and backstage guidelines listed below. Art is a collaborative experience. A critical factor in a student’s readiness for higher-level courses is their ability to positively contribute to our studio culture. This means demonstrating respect for peers, teachers, and our shared creative spaces.

Evaluation for Class Placement:

How it Works: Student Evaluations for classes that require level placement are held during the first and last week of each class session. During these weeks, teachers will observe students based on the three principles outlined above (Artistic Growth, Creative Mindset, and Community Care). Because each art form requires different skills, students are reviewed separately for each style, using our curriculum as a guide.

Keeping it Comfortable: Check-ins are informal and built right into regular class. However, we understand that some students prefer a 1-on-1 environment. If a private check-in would help your artist feel more secure, please let us know, and we will arrange one.

Reaching the Next Level: We love it when our artists are eager to grow! If a student feels ready to challenge themselves in a higher level, we ask that they (or their parents) let the teacher know before the check-in weeks. This allows the teacher to specifically look for next-level readiness. Teachers may also proactively invite a student to try a higher level if they see that the student is ready. Following the check-in period, teachers will email families with personalized placement recommendations and next steps.

The OC Teaching Staff reserves the right to place students in classes that they deem appropriate, and may work with the special needs or circumstances of students and families regarding class placement on a case by case basis. Placement decisions made by the Teaching Staff are final.

Appropriate Attire and Packing Considerations for All Classes:

Athletic clothing and well fitting shoes are recommended for all performing arts classes.

All students are encouraged to bring their own water bottle and an adequate amount of snacks and/or meals if they are participating in longer blocks of classes or rehearsals.

Bulky or dangling accessories should be removed before class for the safety of all students. Likewise, please avoid wearing scented perfumes or lotions that might affect other participants.

Students with sensory sensitivities or cultural consideration may discuss alternative clothing or footwear options with their instructor.

Appropriate Attire for Dance and Movement Focused Classes:

Students should come to class wearing athletic, non-baggy clothing. Examples include: leggings, joggers, tights, tank tops, t-shirts, and leotards.

Layered, non-baggy items such as sweaters and sweatpants when warming up during the colder months are acceptable.

Hair must be pulled up and away from the face.

Ballet classes require students to wear leotards, tights, and ballet shoes. Students are required to have ballet shoes and may opt to wear leotards with tights or tight-fitting pants and a fitted shirt. Ballet skirts or athletic shorts layered over leotards are permitted. Long hair should be worn in a bun for ballet class.

Classes may require additional footwear, such as tap shoes, jazz shoes, or pointe shoes.

These requirements ensure that teachers can see body alignment, which is crucial for proper technique and safety.

Behavioral Expectations for Students:

Engaged Learning: Come prepared to focus and give your best effort. We practice “full body listening” in our studios: heads thinking, eyes looking, ears hearing, voices quiet, bodies focused, and hearts caring. We follow the Platinum Rule: We strive to treat all those around us, adults and children, in the ways *they* wish to be treated.

We do this by:

- Being curious and kind.

- Respecting physical and emotional boundaries (both verbal and non-verbal). When in doubt, we ask.
- Asking questions and listening to understand, rather than jumping to conclusions.

Collaborating with Teachers: Our teachers, staff, and volunteers are here to guide you and keep the studio safe. Listening carefully and following their instructions helps the whole class succeed and allows everyone to have a great time.

Honoring All Feelings: We know that everyone has tough days, and that learning new art skills can be frustrating at times! While all *feelings* are welcome in the studio, not all *behaviors* are. If a student is feeling overwhelmed, we encourage them to let a teacher know so we can support them in a safe and healthy way.

Partnering for Success (Accommodations & Individual Plans) We believe every artist deserves the opportunity to thrive. If you foresee any challenges in meeting these community agreements, please reach out to us! We warmly encourage parents and guardians to let us know about any specific learning needs or helpful accommodations. By communicating proactively, we can partner together to create an individual success plan for your child.

Performance Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines:

Performance Opportunities:

Orcas Center classes often align with performance opportunities at the end of the session. Performance opportunities are geared towards participation at any level, and anyone may join in if they are able to follow these expectations:

- 1) **Desire to Participate:** The Artist wants to practice and progress, as well take on the responsibilities required for rehearsals, classes, and performances.
- 2) **Class/Rehearsal Engagement:** The Artist is focused and motivated during classes, uses a growth mindset when facing new challenges, and has a general sense of artistic inquiry and professionalism.
- 3) **Social Conduct:** The Artist follows the Orcas Center Code of Ethics and Conduct, as well as the class, rehearsal, and backstage guidelines outlined in this Handbook.

We recognize that every person's comfort level with the stage is different. For many of our standard classes, the end-of-session performance is highly encouraged but entirely optional. You do not have to perform to take the class!

- *If you or your artist chooses not to perform:* Please note that our teachers will naturally use class time to "work up" toward the performance goal. Non-performing students are still fully included in learning the routines, techniques, and materials alongside their peers, even if they won't be under the stage lights.
- *Mandatory Performances:* If a class or camp is specifically designed to produce a show (such as a musical theater workshop or a production with assigned casting), participation in the final performance is required to enroll in the class.

OC welcomes artists with all abilities and will provide reasonable accommodations to support their participation, including adaptive techniques and modified instruction.

Audition Processes:

Stepping Up: Artists who wish to take on roles requiring advanced technical skills and greater responsibility may be invited to audition. We view auditions not just as a selection process, but as an educational opportunity for students to practice courage, preparation, and presentation. To ensure everyone has ample time to prepare and feel confident, directors will release audition announcements and materials at least two weeks before the audition date.

Casting: Casting a show is a complex and thoughtful puzzle. Directors aren't just looking for the loudest voice or the highest leap; they are building a collaborative ensemble. Casting decisions are based on:

- **The Needs of the Role:** Does the artist's current skill set match the specific technical demands of the character?
- **Readiness & Responsibility:** Does the artist demonstrate the emotional readiness, focus, and growth mindset required to handle the pressure and time commitment of a larger role?
- **The Big Picture:** How do the artists' energies, ages, and dynamics work together to create a cohesive and supportive cast?

Trusting the Director's Vision: Because the director is responsible for both the artistic vision of the show and the emotional well-being of the entire ensemble, they have the unique perspective needed to see how all the pieces of the puzzle fit together. For this reason, all casting decisions made by the director(s) are final. We ask that artists and families trust the director's professional expertise, knowing that their goal is to place every student in a role where they will safely succeed and shine.

Partnering on Accommodations: Every artist has a place in our community. Directors are always open to collaborating with families on a case-by-case basis regarding special needs, unique circumstances, or accommodations during the audition and casting process.

Rehearsal Attendance:

Participating artists must show a level of commitment to themselves and other dancers. Therefore, attendance at all rehearsals is expected.

If an artist agrees to perform a piece, they must make every possible effort to attend rehearsals, show up on time, and communicate absences or rehearsal preferences prior to scheduling.

If an artist misses a rehearsal, they must inform the stage manager / director / choreographer of their intended absence so they may plan accordingly. The Artist is also expected to make a reasonable effort to learn any missed material and review learned material to stay up to speed.

The result of three or more missed rehearsals may result in casting changes.

Costuming:

Orcas Center is dedicated to providing costume items for all performance opportunities whenever possible. Artists will need to provide their own clothing "base" for underneath their costumes, such as leotards, tights, and shoes. Artists may also be asked to provide costume items that they likely already have in their home, such as jeans, black leggings, or a solid color t-shirt.

Performers are expected to treat costumes with respect (e.g. hanging them in the correct place) and if borrowed from the Orcas Center, must leave them at the theater after the performance is over.

Rehearsal & Backstage Agreements:

Moving from the classroom to the stage is an exciting step. Because backstage areas are shared spaces with moving parts, darkness, and live microphones, safety and teamwork are our top priorities. All of our regular Community Agreements (including "Full Body Listening" and treating others using the Platinum Rule) apply backstage, along with a few special guidelines just for rehearsals and performances:

- **The Magic of Quiet:** Sound travels easily from backstage to the audience! To support our fellow cast members performing on stage, we use low, quiet voices and walk quietly at all times in the wings and hallways.
- **Respecting the "Safe Zones":** To keep everyone safe and accounted for, students and performers must stay within their assigned dressing rooms or designated backstage wings. Wandering into undesignated areas can be dangerous and makes it difficult for our team to find you when it's your turn to shine.
- **A Focused Environment:** To maintain a secure, focused, and uncrowded backstage area, non-performing students, friends, and family members are not permitted backstage unless explicitly approved by a Teacher, Stage Manager, or Backstage Volunteer.

- **The Art of Waiting:** Putting on a show involves a lot of downtime. We strongly encourage performers to bring quiet, family-friendly activities (such as books, coloring, or homework) to help pass the time peacefully. Individual use of silent electronics is permitted on a case-by-case basis.
- **Following Our Guides:** Our Teachers, Stage Managers, and Backstage Volunteers are there to keep the show running smoothly and safely. Listening carefully and responding immediately to their directions are vital to the success of the production.
- **A Healthy Space:** To ensure a safe environment for all of our youth, the use or possession of alcohol, drugs, or illegal substances during rehearsals, backstage, or during shows is strictly prohibited, and will result in immediate removal from the cast and the building.

Partnering for Backstage Success: The backstage environment can sometimes be dark, loud, or overstimulating. If you foresee any challenges with these backstage expectations, or if your artist needs accommodations, please reach out to us directly. Together, we can create an individual plan to ensure your student feels safe and supported throughout the rehearsal and performance process.

Media Use Statement:

Orcas Center often records audio and video and professional photographs of shows on the stages for future use in marketing and archival use. By agreeing to casting and participation in a show at Orcas Center, you are also automatically agreeing to Orcas Center staff capturing and utilizing your voice and image for these purposes. Orcas Center is sensitive to how these images - and particularly the images of minors - are used, and we avoid the use of pictures of youth on social media. However, other cast members, friends, and families capture and post their own media from rehearsals and shows, and it is impossible for Orcas Center to prevent this. As such, by agreeing to be in a show, you must accept that your likeness will appear online in some form. If you have a particular objection to a particular image or recording, let us know and we will do our best to accommodate you.

Code of Ethics:

Ethics and Inclusion Statement:

Orcas Center's Arts Education Programming is built on the belief that everyone should have access to its programming and be treated equally among others, regardless of race, gender identification, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, citizenship status, national origin, native language, religion, ability, age, background, pregnancy, mobility limitations, sensory impairment, or any other characteristic protected by law. Members are expected to show understanding, empathy, and respect for other people and cultures within Orcas Center, traditional Coast Salish lands, and the community at large.

Key Principles of Equity and Inclusion at Orcas Center include:

- 1) Accessible Opportunities: We are committed to removing barriers and providing accessible opportunities for all community members to participate in our programs and utilize our facilities. This includes addressing physical, economic, and cultural barriers that may hinder participation.
- 2) Diverse Representation: We aim to reflect the diversity of our community in all aspects of our operations, from staff and leadership to programming and decision-making. We value diverse perspectives and actively seek to recognize underrepresented and underserved voices.
- 3) Inclusive and Responsive Programming: We strive to develop and implement programs that are actively anti-racist, culturally inclusive and responsive, that acknowledge and respect the unique needs and interests of different communities within our district.
- 4) Continuous Learning: We are dedicated to continuous learning and improvement in matters of equity and inclusion. This includes ongoing training for our commissioners and staff, engaging with community feedback, and staying informed about best practices in diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- 5) Safe and Inclusive Spaces: We are committed to creating safe and inclusive spaces where individuals of all backgrounds feel comfortable and welcome. Harassment, discrimination, and exclusionary behaviors will not be tolerated.

By embracing these principles, Orcas Center aims to support positive social spaces and a sense of belonging, so that everyone can thrive and enjoy the numerous benefits of the performing and visual arts, as well as personal artistic development.

Fostering Positive Arts Culture:

Orcas Center seeks to foster a positive culture within our creative community as well as within ourselves.

We believe the beauty of our community is rooted in the diversity of our experiences. We recognize that we are a team working at different levels of experience. It is the expectation of Orcas Center that we support each other at every level of our individual arts journeys. We wish to uphold an inclusive, equitable, and empowered space for everyone to practice and grow.

We believe that everybody can explore their creativity through the arts. We recognize that every person is different and may have different needs in pursuing their artistic goals. It is the expectation of Orcas Center that we appreciate and celebrate the unique beauty and strength of each individual. We wish to uphold a welcoming and uplifting space where everyone can feel proud of who they are.

We believe that focusing on the *process* of our creative journey through the arts is more important than the *product* itself. We recognize that having a growth mindset can help us work through challenges and protect our mental health. It is the expectation of Orcas Center that we remain kind and patient with ourselves as we work towards our personal and collective goals. We wish to uphold a curious and playful space where everyone can feel safe to explore.

We believe we are stronger together. We recognize that positivity and empathy are our collective superpowers. It is the expectation of Orcas Center that we remain kind and respectful towards others as we work towards our personal and collective goals. We wish to uphold a compassionate and connected space where everyone can feel like they belong.

It is the expectation that everyone involved at Orcas Center will foster this ethos with their words and actions.

Code of Conduct:

Orcas Center is committed to preserving the integrity of our organization, the safety of all who participate in their programming, and wish to prevent violence towards all its patrons in order to maintain a positive environment for all.

Bullying is not tolerated at Orcas Center. All patrons in the building, whether they are students, teacher, staff, or audience members, should be treated with courtesy and respect at all times.

Physical fights or assault to a person's physical boundaries will not be tolerated at Orcas Center. All patrons are expected to refrain from fighting, "horseplay," or other conduct that may be dangerous to others.

Orcas Center will not tolerate conduct that threatens, intimidates, or coerces another employee, teacher, student, or a member of the public at any time. This includes all acts of harassment, including harassment that is based on an individual's sex, race, class, age, or any characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law.

Navigating Challenges: Learning to collaborate in an artistic community takes practice. We recognize that challenging behavior is often a student's way of communicating that they are overwhelmed, dysregulated, or needing extra support. Our directors, teachers, and staff are committed to responding to these moments thoughtfully, kindly, and collaboratively.

When a student struggles to follow our Community Agreements, we use a four-step approach to help them get back on track:

Step 1: In-Class Support & Redirection: The teacher or staff member will offer a reminder, a supportive check-in, or the option to take a quiet "reset" moment.

Step 2: Partnering with Families: If a student continues to struggle with regulation or class engagement, we will reach out to the parents/guardians. You know your child best! Our goal at this stage is to share observations and ask for your insights on how we can better support them in the studio.

Step 3: Collaborative Success Plan: If the challenges are ongoing, we will invite the parents/guardians to a meeting. Together, we will create a personalized "Success Plan" with concrete strategies to help the student thrive.

Step 4: Direct Family Support: If a student requires more redirection than a teacher can safely provide while managing the rest of the class, a parent/guardian may be asked to attend rehearsals to help monitor and support their child's engagement.

Maintaining a Safe Environment (Program Pauses or Dismissal) While we will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations and support, our primary responsibility is the physical and emotional safety of the entire cast and crew. In rare situations involving physical harm, severe breaches of the Code of Ethics, or continuous behavior that prevents the class from functioning safely, an artist may be asked to pause their participation or be removed from Orcas Center's Arts Education programming.

Incident Reporting and Parent Notification for Disruptive Behavior

Communication & Incident Reporting: If a behavioral or emotional challenge arises that requires moving beyond Step 1 of our Support Plan, families can expect the following communication process:

1. **Early & Collaborative Outreach:** We will reach out to you early! Our goal is to call you to ask for your insights *before* a small challenge becomes a big problem.
2. **Team Meetings:** If a Success Plan is needed, the Program Director will contact you to schedule a brief collaborative meeting with the teaching staff.
3. **Documentation:** For the safety and transparency of our program, our staff submits internal "Incident Reports" for any significant behavioral, emotional, or physical events. If an Incident Report is filed regarding your child, the Program Director will notify you within 24 hours to keep you in the loop.

Reporting Discrimination, Harassment, and Assault of Any Type

Orcas Center is committed to providing a creative environment free from harassment, discrimination, and bullying. We take the emotional and physical safety of our community incredibly seriously. If a

student, teacher, or volunteer experiences or witnesses behavior that violates our Code of Ethics or makes them feel unsafe, we use the following process to protect our community:

- 1) **You Are Not Alone (Seeking Help):** If you experience or witness unsafe or harassing behavior, you always have the right to firmly tell that person to stop. However, you are never required to confront the person making you uncomfortable. We encourage you to immediately bring the issue to a trusted Teacher, Stage Manager, or Orcas Center Staff member so we can support you.
- 2) **Mandatory Reporting:** Any teacher, student, or volunteer who believes they have been subjected to (or have witnessed) discriminatory or harassing conduct must report it immediately to the Orcas Center Staff. To ensure no concern falls through the cracks, all Teachers and Staff are required to report any incidents or rumors of incidents directly to the Executive Artistic Director.
- 3) **How We Respond:** Every reported incident will be promptly and thoughtfully investigated by the administration. While we cannot promise absolute secrecy (as we must involve the necessary parties to ensure safety and legal compliance), we promise to handle your report with the utmost privacy, care, and discretion. If a complaint is found to be valid, immediate and appropriate action will be taken to restore safety.
- 4) **Zero Retaliation Policy:** Orcas Center strictly prohibits any form of retaliation. No individual who reports a complaint in good faith, or who participates in an investigation, will be punished or retaliated against in any way.
- 5) **Consequences for Harm:** Protecting our community is our highest priority. Anyone found to have engaged in harassment, discrimination, or severe breaches of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination of employment or permanent removal from Orcas Center's Arts Education programming.

Expectations for Teachers, Directors, and Backstage Volunteers:

Requirements for Teachers, Directors, and Backstage Volunteers:

The safety of our youth is our highest priority. To ensure every child is protected, and to guarantee that every adult feels completely confident and equipped to lead, all teachers, directors, and backstage volunteers must complete our Safeguarding and Readiness process before stepping into the studio or backstage areas.

- 1) **Vetting and Screening:** As a vital baseline for community safety, all adults working with our youth must participate in a staff screening, which includes a comprehensive personal background check.

2) Essential Safety Training: We want our team to feel fully prepared to handle any situation with care and expertise. All teachers, directors, and volunteers participating in youth courses or performances are required to hold and maintain:

- Current First Aid / CPR Certification
- *Darkness to Light Sexual Abuse Awareness Training (Orcas Center provides annual opportunities to complete these specific courses).*

3) Committing to Our Code: Leading by example is the best way to teach. All adults are required to review, sign, and strictly adhere to the Adult Behavioral Expectations and Code of Ethics outlined below.

Supervision Practices and Adult-to-Child Ratios:

A well-supervised environment is the foundation of a safe and productive arts program. To ensure every student gets the attention they need, and to protect both our youth and our staff, Orcas Center adheres to strict supervision standards across all classes, rehearsals, and performances.

The Orcas Center follows the Washington State staffing recommendation of a 15:1 student-to-teacher ratio. If a class, rehearsal room, or backstage area has more than 15 students present, the lead teacher or director will be supported by a second vetted adult or teaching assistant who meets our safety requirements.

Backstage & Breaks: To keep everyone safe, children are never to be left alone or allowed to wander backstage or unsupervised throughout the building. Students must always be under the active supervision (within line of sight or earshot) of a vetted teacher, director, or backstage volunteer.

Transparent Teaching (1:1 Settings): We understand that 1:1 instruction (such as a private vocal lesson, a solo rehearsal, or a specialized coaching session) is sometimes necessary for a student's artistic growth. In these instances, staff must practice "Transparent Teaching" to protect both the student and the instructor. A 1:1 session may only occur if:

- The door to the room remains propped open.
- The room has an unobstructed interior window visible to a public hallway.
- Or, a second adult (such as a parent/guardian or another staff member) is present in the room.

Bathrooms & Dressing Rooms: We are committed to protecting our students' bodily autonomy and privacy while keeping them safe. Teachers, directors, and volunteers are trained to supervise these vulnerable spaces using the following boundaries:

Bathrooms: Adults will not enter a multi-stall bathroom while youth are using it unless there is an immediate health or safety emergency. Instead, an adult will check the bathroom first to ensure it is empty of unauthorized personnel, and then stand outside the door to monitor behavior and ensure students return safely to class.

Dressing Rooms: Dressing rooms are youth-only zones during active changing times. Adults supervise from the hallway or just outside the doorway to maintain order and safety without compromising privacy. If a child requires assistance with a complex costume, the assistance should be provided in an open area or with two vetted adults present. Adults and youth are never permitted to change clothes in the same room at the same time. Additionally, no cell-phone use is permitted in dressing rooms or bathrooms.

Care for Minors:

Every teacher, staff member, and volunteer at Orcas Center is entrusted with the incredible responsibility of caring for our youth. We are committed to fostering an environment where every child feels emotionally and physically safe, valued, and respected.

To create this environment, all adults must commit to the following best practices:

- **Respectful Connection:** We treat children as individuals, respecting their unique needs, desires, and feelings. We actively listen to them and explain concepts at an age-appropriate level.
- **Encouragement & Validation:** We praise effort, celebrate growth, and encourage children through challenges.
- **Proactive Guidance:** We modify the physical environment to prevent problems before they occur. Instead of just giving orders, we reason with students, collaboratively set expectations, and model the behavior we wish to see.

Supporting Our Staff (The "Tag-Out" Policy) We know that working with youth requires immense energy, and everyone has moments of frustration! We actively support our teachers' well-being. If an adult ever feels overwhelmed or dysregulated, we encourage them to take a breath and ask a co-teacher, volunteer, or the Director to "tag in" and take over the situation so the adult can reset.

Zero Tolerance for Harm (Protecting Safety) Because the physical and emotional safety of our students is non-negotiable, Orcas Center strictly prohibits any of the following behaviors from any adult in our programs:

- **Physical Harm:** Spanking, shaking, biting, pinching, pushing, pulling, slapping, or any other form of physical punishment or aggressive physical redirection.
- **Verbal Abuse:** Ridiculing, yelling at, threatening, using profanity, or employing other verbally abusive tactics.

- Emotional Harm: Shaming children, or belittling/criticizing children, their families, or any ethnic, cultural, or religious group.
- Neglect: Leaving children alone, unattended, or without proper supervision at any time.
- Withholding Basic Needs: Denying food, water, bathroom access, or rest as a form of punishment.

Behavioral Expectations for Teachers, Directors, and Backstage Volunteers:

Professional Community Standards: To ensure our programs run smoothly and provide the best possible environment for our youth, we expect all adults to uphold the highest professional standards. Following our Code of Ethics and Conduct protects the interests, safety, and creative joy of all staff, students, and patrons of Orcas Center.

While it is impossible to list every scenario, the following are examples of unacceptable conduct that compromises our community. Engaging in these behaviors may result in immediate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer status:

Protecting Physical & Emotional Safety (Zero Tolerance)

- Working under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Possession, distribution, sale, transfer, or use of alcohol or illegal drugs in the workplace.
- Fighting, physical aggression, or threatening violence.
- Sexual, discriminatory, or any other form of unlawful or unwelcome harassment.
- Possession of dangerous or unauthorized materials/weapons on the premises.
- Violation of established safety, health, or child-safeguarding rules.

Protecting Professional Integrity & Property

- Falsification of timekeeping, background checks, or other official records.
- Theft, or the inappropriate removal or possession of Orcas Center property.
- Excessive absenteeism, or failing to provide notice for an absence (leaving students without proper coverage).
- Consistent unsatisfactory performance or conduct.

Protecting the Collaborative Environment

- Refusal to follow safety directives or engaging in disrespectful conduct toward leadership, peers, or families (insubordination).
- Unprofessional disruptions that hinder the creative process, the work environment, or the safety of a rehearsal or class.
- Willful violation of Orcas Center personnel policies.

The Nature of Our Partnership (At-Will Status): We hope that every adult who joins our team finds it a deeply rewarding experience. However, because employment and volunteer opportunities are based on mutual consent, it is important to note that either you or Orcas Center has the right to terminate the relationship at will, with or without cause or advance notice, at any time.

Liability Statement:

I understand that I am voluntarily choosing to participate in classes, rehearsals, performances, workshops, camps, events, volunteer activities, and/or other programs offered or sponsored by Orcas Center ("Programs"). In doing so, all participants of Orcas Center Programs agree to adhere to the following:

Acknowledgement of Risks: I understand that participation in performing arts and related activities involves inherent risks that cannot be completely eliminated. These risks may include, but are not limited to:

- Slips, trips, and falls;
- Physical exertion, stretching, dancing, lifting, and repetitive movement;
- Use of stages, platforms, stairs, scenery, props, costumes, tools, lighting, sound equipment, and other theatrical equipment;
- Contact with other participants; and
- Accidental injury resulting from rehearsals, performances, or other Program activities.

I understand that these and other risks may result in personal injury, illness, disability, property damage, or, in rare circumstances, death.

Assumption of Risk: I knowingly and voluntarily assume all ordinary risks associated with my participation in Orcas Center Programs and my use of facilities owned, leased, rented, or otherwise used by Orcas Center. I acknowledge that I am responsible for determining whether I am physically able to safely participate in these activities.

Release of Liability: To the fullest extent permitted by applicable law, I release and hold harmless Orcas Center and its directors, officers, employees, instructors, volunteers, contractors, agents, and representatives ("Released Parties") from claims for personal injury, illness, disability, or property damage arising out of my participation in Orcas Center Programs or my use of Orcas Center facilities, except to the extent such claims result from gross negligence, reckless conduct, or intentional misconduct where liability cannot legally be waived. I further agree to reimburse Orcas Center for damage to its property resulting from my intentional misconduct or negligent actions. This release applies only to the extent permitted by the laws of the State of Washington.

Medical Care: In the event of an emergency in which I am unable to make decisions for myself, I authorize Orcas Center to seek emergency medical treatment on my behalf. I understand that I am solely responsible for any medical expenses incurred.

Security Cameras: I understand that, for the safety and security of participants, visitors, volunteers, and staff, common areas of Orcas Center facilities (excluding restrooms and dressing rooms) may be monitored by security cameras. I consent to being recorded while participating in Orcas Center Programs. These recordings are used for security and operational purposes and may be retained and disclosed as permitted by law.

Revisions and Access to the Handbook:

Orcas Center Staff reserves the right to make revisions to this Handbook at any time. This Handbook will be made publicly available online, and a printed copy will be kept in the box office and will be available upon request.