

Kadampa Center
Children and Youth Program
Reference Materials

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Role of the Preschool Volunteer

All parents who have kids in the preschool room and who are not teaching another class are encouraged to volunteer. It is a great place to form friendships, and we typically do not have non-parents volunteer for the preschool room. Volunteers created a "classroom flow" document located on the next page. FAQs about the flow:

Why have Teacher 1 and Teacher 2?

It's always great to work as a team, and any time that works, please collaborate. However, volunteers are always changing, and we try to schedule one volunteer who is comfortable with the flow of the class, talking to parents, and who knows the kids who attend regularly. (Teacher 1)

Several volunteers have requested specific direction so that they know how to be most useful, so these roles provide information about what the typical flow is and suggestions for helping. (Teacher 2)

Do we have to follow the "schedule?"

Nope. Do what works. The vibe of the class varies greatly depending on the ages, comfort level, and temperament of the kids on any given day.

Can preschoolers learn prostrations?

Yes! We've seen it done many times.

This is the way prostrations can be done in the Tibetan tradition. Stand up tall with your head slightly bowed towards the altar. Place your two palms together, tucking your thumbs inside them as if you were holding a precious jewel.

- Touch your hands to four places on your body: the crown of your head, forehead, throat, and chest.
- As you touch each of these four places, think that you will develop all the good qualities and powers of a Buddha's body, speech and mind in order to help others.
- Then bend over and place your knees, hands, and forehead to the floor. While you are doing this think, "I am going closer to enlightenment."
- As soon as your forehead touches the floor, stand up again quickly. As you are getting up think, "I will quickly lead all beings up and out of their suffering."

Repeat this entire action, beginning with touching your four places, a second and third time (or more, if you want), and finish up by touching your four places one last time.

Is there a short English prayer we can say with snack?

Thank you, all living beings
For giving us this food
May it nourish us so that
We may nourish others

How do we handle bathroom breaks and dirty diapers?

When a child needs to use the restroom, a female volunteer takes the child to one of the stalls in the women's room.

The volunteer makes sure the child has what he or she needs, such as a stool or potty seat

Volunteers do not assist children in using the bathroom.

Volunteers do not change diapers.

Volunteers will retrieve parents for dirty diapers and/or bathroom assistance.

Teacher 1	Teacher 2
Before class – Decide what book to read. Choose any book with a positive message. (Do this at 10:25 if you don't have time at home.)	Before class (optional) – Prepare a fresh snack to bring such as fruit. A little goes a long way in this class
PREP TIME (10:25 until ~10:40)	
Set up classroom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put an activity on the table for 3-4 year olds such as a puzzle or coloring (optional) If families enter, make introductions, answer questions, find out if their child is on the roll sheet, etc. 	Check in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Say "hi" to the General Assistant so that we know the volunteers are here and ready to go Get a pitcher of water for snack time (do later, if necessary) Join families in the gumpa
KIDS ENTER AND TRANSITION TO PRESCHOOL ROOM (~10:40)	
Check in kids <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use clip board to check attendance sheet (verify allergy info) Write child's name on nametag (add a star for allergies) 	Door and parent info <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch door for exiting children, hold babies If necessary, kindly ask parents to stay a minute for the check-in process
FREE PLAY (20 to 30 minutes)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep an eye on table activities Help new or unsure kids get adjusted - bubbles often make for lots of smiles! 	
CLEAN UP (between 11:00 and 11:10)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage kids who are old enough to put toys away. If you know a clean-up song, have fun with it! 	
SNACK AND STORY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice thanks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk about where food came from Say "OM AH HUM" Read story <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask questions about characters, feelings, possible outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pass out snacks and water and refill as necessary Finish picking up toys so that there is an open space on the floor
ACTIVITIES (may start between 11:20 and 11:40) – either teacher can lead any activity	
Guide kids offering coins for the merit box <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose is make a visual connection to our teachers Show kids Shakyamuni Buddha, Lama Tsongkhapa, Lama Yeshe, Lama Zopa Rinpoche (photos depend on the box) Hand out coins one at a time Ask kids to make a gift from their heart or say some simple like "I wish happiness for all beings" Guide kids making light offerings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand out "candles" one at a time Ask kids to say thank you to teachers for teaching us and say OM AH HUM and place candles next to teacher's photo Guide kids in making prostrations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details on question page 	Art <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stickers, coloring, painting with water Music on Classroom CD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes songs with movements, fun songs, and mantras Play non-competitive musical chairs where each kid has a chair and when the music stops they sit, but no chairs are taken away Dance! Songs to sing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head, shoulders, knees, and toes Twinkle, twinkle, little star Games <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duck, duck, goose Ring around the rosies Free Play <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whatever works!
TRANSITION TIME (about 12:00)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk to parents about what a wonderful morning their child had 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay by door to watch for exiting children

Role of the Classroom Teacher

Volunteer teachers usually choose one age group to focus on: age 5 – grade 1, 2nd-4th, 5th-8th, or high school. The teacher prepares the lesson and activity or craft and presents the lesson. Teachers typically teach every other week.

Many parents are drawn to volunteer as teachers but parenthood is not a pre-requisite! Some awareness of child development or developmentally appropriate learning approaches is helpful. The ability to communicate by email is necessary for this job as this is the primary means of communication between the teachers and the children's program coordinator(s). Also, the willingness to study the curriculum is necessary. Support is available for lesson plans, developing resources, etc.

The Teacher

(taken from *Tips for Nurturing Spiritual Development in Children: A Teacher's Guide* compiled and developed by Sandy Smith, published by FPMT)

The teacher should be:

- Sincerely motivated from the heart to be of benefit to students
- Committed to following a correct path, which includes the practice of ethics, patience, generosity, and respect for others
- Approachable, good listener, effective communicator
- Reliable

Resources

Sections in this document including: Class Structure, Teaching Tips, and Practice

Ready Set Happy, written by Denise Flora, is a collection of songs, poems, plays, games, and science experiments for children, families and teachers, based on the 16 Guidelines for life. It has been designed for 7- to 11-year-olds but is also being used with younger and older children.

FPMT books (located in the preschool room): *Meditations for Children* compiled and developed by Sandy Smith, *Camp Vajrapani* written by Bev Gwyn (includes activities and Buddhist practice for children), *Plays for Children* compiled by Sandy Smith and Rainee Skinner, and *Tips for Nurturing Spiritual Development in Children* compiled and developed by Sandy Smith

Various collections of Jataka Tales (located in the preschool room)

The internet, the library – and your fellow teachers!

Role of the Classroom Assistant

Volunteer assistants usually choose one age group to focus on: age 5 – grade 1, 2nd-4th, 5th-8th, or high school. The assistant supports the teacher. Assistants typically volunteer every other week or once a month.

Helping with classroom management during lessons is the most important role of an assistant. (Please refer to Behavior Management and Simple Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Students later in this document.) Having a second adult in the room is also helpful for safety and liability. Ways to help include:

- General support/reinforcement of what is being taught. For example, if the kids are doing something individual like an art project, ask kids about their creations or tell what you like about it. If there is discussion going on, answer one of the teacher's questions or ask another question to help facilitate discussion.
- Help keep kids on track. For example, if a child is talking while the teacher is talking, redirect his attention. Sometimes simply placing your hand on the child's shoulder is reminder enough to stop talking and to pay attention. Remind kids to keep their hands to themselves and show respect to the class and their teacher.
- If there is major disruption happening, go to the gompas to get the child's parent (bring a third adult into the room first, if necessary)
- Help set up the a project or snack while the teacher is teaching or take over for a few minutes and ask some questions while the teacher sets up the next activity
- Help keep kids seated or occupied as parents are picking up their children. This enables the teacher to be available to speak with parents as they pick up their children from class.
- Help clean up after class. Often teachers have obligations immediately following class and your assistance would be of great benefit

There may be kids in the class who have a tendency to move around, fidget, or even wander. Some movement may help them refocus. However, intentional acts of hurtfulness to others' feelings or bodies or otherwise being disrespectful are not allowed.

Resources

Sections in this document including: Behavior Management and Simple Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Students

Role of the General Assistant

The General Assistant provides overall support to the Sunday morning Children and Youth Program. A willingness to pitch in and help whenever, wherever, and whatever is needed is crucial to this position. General duties are listed below in chronological order.

10:15 arrival to Kadampa Center:

- Wear your nametag
- Introduce yourself to greeters so that they can direct new/visiting families to you
- Open burgundy shoe bins & direct K – 4th graders to place shoes in them
- Arrange bookstore tables and put out "Reserved" signs on library and bookstore tables
- Greet and welcome families and be available to answer questions
- Provide informational program handout to new/visiting families
- Have new families fill out and return information/contact sheet to Children's Program mailbox

~10:40 dismissal from the gompa:

- Exit the gompa along with the children when they are dismissed for class
- Assist in helping the children transition to their class: inform new/visiting parents where their child's class is located, help with shoes, direct children to their appropriate class, etc.
- Try to introduce new parents to their child's teacher and make a connection with them; this will be especially important if you ever need to find a child's parent during class for any reason

Beginning of class:

- Turn speakers off in bookstore area and library area when teens are meeting there
- Do a quick walk-through of all classes to assure class coverage of teachers and assistants and to do an initial check-in to make sure there aren't any problems
- If a class is not fully staffed, plan to stay to assist the teacher

During class:

- Have cell phone on in case the teachers in the Education Building need anything
- Remain in the lobby area of the main building to be "on call" should the Nursery/Preschool room and/or the 5th-8th grade class (in bookstore) need assistance.
- Throughout program duration, check in on the Preschool Class. Some tasks may include:
 - Holding/walking around with a baby
 - Taking older children (3-4's) outside for supervised playtime
 - Bathroom breaks
 - Fill-in while teacher changes a diaper
- In general, be available to all areas to provide assistance with bathroom breaks, behavior difficulties, classroom management, any other needs, etc.
- Be available to handle emergency and/or difficult situations or, should the need arise, to find a child's parent in the gompa

Towards the end of class, ~12:00:

- Once parents dismiss from the teachings, be available again to answer questions, provide or collect forms/handouts, assist parents in locating their child's classroom, etc.
- Make sure "Reserved" signs get put back

Class Structure

One key to a successful class is consistency. Below is a suggested outline for the class. Many teachers do a few of these activities every week may incorporate more depending on factors such as: the topic, the size of the class, the presence of new kids, the weather.

Activity	Example of this activity
Get Ready	(Age 5 – 4th) When putting on shoes, provide clear expectations, for example, “Remember, we walk to class, put our shoes on the shelf, and then sit at the table.” (All) As kids are getting settled, “How do you let me know you are ready for class?” (Sitting quietly.) –OR- Let’s start with a centering, focusing, or mindfulness activity...
Set Motivation	In this class, we want to develop our innate (natural) ability to be kind and wise. Today we will talk about [courage] and [what it means to be brave enough to make good choices]
Introductions	(Introduce yourself and anyone new.) Is there anyone who can say everyone else’s name who is in the class?
Class “Rules”	Our #1 rule in this class is Respect. What does that mean? -OR- Our topic is [courage]. How does that relate to how we treat our teacher and our classmates? (Let kids summarize a few of the expectations for the class.)
Snack	Consider when you will have snack, and communicate your plan to the class, if necessary. (Today I will talk about the topic while you have snack and then we will do an art project. –OR- We will talk about the topic and then I will read a story while you have snack. –OR- Today we’ll be moving around a lot, so we’ll have snack after yoga.)
Practice	Mantras, Merit Box, Prostrations, Blessing Food (refer to section in this document) Meditation, Mindfulness Water Bowls, Mandala Offerings
Teaching the Topic	Methods of teaching include: name games, storytelling, writing a story, discussion and sharing, brainstorming, guest speaker, debates, quiz, art, puppets, role play and drama games, scripted plays, singing and music, yoga, tai chi, or relaxation exercise, cooperative, non-competitive games, trust games, sharing nature, audio and video, dance, community project
Closing/Dedication	May the good energy from this session help me to become perfectly wise and loving so that I can help others all the time.

Teaching Tips

Teaching Strategies and the Learning Process

(taken from *Tips for Nurturing Spiritual Development in Children: A Teacher's Guide* compiled and developed by Sandy Smith, published by FPMT)

- Children learn the most through experience, discovery, and active participation in the learning process.
- A teacher should work at building rapport with the students in order to create an atmosphere of harmony, appreciation, and respect. If good personal relationships are developed, the children will be more receptive and open to learning.
- Children will learn most effectively in an environment where they feel safe and confident. The teacher is responsible for establishing an atmosphere of trust and effective communication.
- Students need to be interested in the topic and willing to learn in a variety of ways. They must also be relaxed, keen, and involved. Be realistic about the students' capabilities.
- It is essential that the teacher have an honest appreciation of her own skills and talents and level of knowledge and understanding. At the beginning, the teacher should choose subject with which she feels competent and conversant and use teaching methods that suit her own personal style of presentation.

Lesson Planning

(taken from *Tips for Nurturing Spiritual Development in Children*)

Lesson preparation is time consuming but essential. As a teacher, one must know what and how one will be teaching, to maximize the benefit and effectiveness of the session.

Aims and Outcomes

- Keep the aim specific, simple, and clear. Identify key points around which the content material is presented.
- What do you want the students to know/understand/reflect on at the end of the lesson? What is the purpose and focus of the less?
- Clarify the direction and the desired outcome of the lesson – how will you draw together the theme of the lesson, so that aim is achieved?

Content

- The subject matter must be relevant to their lives and suited to their age, culture, interests, and environment.
- Choose a number of activities that the students will enjoy and which can be complete within the time frame.
- Provide for a variety of learning styles: include audio, visual, and kinesthetic activities that relate to key points of the lesson and help the students to understand the topic.
- Balance three areas of learning: key teachings and beliefs (sacred writings, stories of significant people, past and present, etc.) human experience (big issues and questions about life), and personal beliefs and attitudes

Delivery

- Start with an interesting introduction to capture the attention of the students.

- Progress from the known to the unknown so the material presented follows a natural progression. That can mean starting with a story or song, allowing the children to ask questions about it and then relating it to the students' own life experiences
- Talk naturally about real life events – this brings the teaching material alive. Tell stories or use appropriate examples from one's own experience
- Develop a rapport with students by learning and using their names whenever possible. Make personal contact in simple ways: by a smile or a friendly comment
- Acknowledge feelings and concerns. Respect them as people who can learn to act in helpful ways and take responsibility for their own actions.

Behavior Management

(taken from *Tips for Nurturing Spiritual Development in Children*)

Goals of Behavior Management

- To develop self-discipline and self-control
- To promote values of honesty and fairness
- To enhance each student's self-esteem
- To enable conflict resolution
- To be on task with learning
- To encourage accountability for behavior
- To recognize and respect the rights of others
- To affirm cooperation as well as independence in learning

Planning for Management and Establishing Ground Rules

FPMT suggests developing rules at the beginning of the year. We may decide to do that. However, the classes are fluid with several of the students coming and going. So, you may want to establish a few rules with your class.

- Listen when others are talking
- Use kind words
- Take care of the materials and objects in the classroom
- Respect others' bodies by keeping our hands to ourselves

FPMT suggests stating consequences also. That may end up sounding negative if you focus on consequences. Use whatever method works for your class.

Preventative Action

- Arrive on Time
- Develop clear lesson routines. Be consistent – pick a routine and stick to it.
- Use confident language, tone of voice, and body gestures
- Give clear and simple instructions
- Prepare for the disorganized or disruptive. Keep a "survival kit" on hand with pencils, glue, scissors, workbook, etc.
- Plan interesting lessons
- Make sure that appropriate materials are readily accessible to the children
- Cater and plan for mixed abilities, including a range of learning styles
- Plan appropriate seating arrangements for planned activities
- Plan beforehand for the language of discipline (what you say and when)

Protocols of Discipline

- Start with the least and move to the most intrusive strategy
- Maintain eye contact
- Seek to minimize embarrassment and hostility

- Use a respectful but assertive tone of voice
- Privately encourage positive behaviors
- Pay special attention to spatial proximity and personal space
- Avoid unnecessary arguments
- Give clear choices to maximize students' responsibility
- Be consistent and follow through
- Maintain respect for the student throughout, no matter what happens

Corrective Action

- Begin with tactical ignoring (where appropriate)
- Move toward a time-out strategy (in the case of continual disruption or dangerous behavior)
- If you do not have an assistant in your class, call the General Assistant to help with time-out as necessary

Simple Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Students

(taken from *Discipline without Stress Punishments or Rewards* by Dr Marvin Marshall)

Think of students as lacking skills to handle impulses – or that the behavior is the student's best effort at the time to handle a frustration. Few students are maliciously disruptive.

Reflect on your own goal. Your goal will direct how you handle the situation. If your desire is to help the student, then be willing to negotiate. There may be factors involved of which you are unaware.

Send Positive Messages

When a student is off task or exhibits inappropriate behavior, be positive by stating what you want – not what you don't want. Simply inform the student what you would like to see happen. This helps the student understand your desires and stops the student from engaging in one behavior only to engage in another, non-productive one.

Students with short attention spans have a difficult time getting started on a task. Give clear, concise starting directions.

Ask for the student's help. Put the problem to the student; let the student know that you don't know how to solve the disruptive behavior. Asking for help taps into a natural desire to help other when in need.

Put the person in charge of the activity. It is almost impossible to be in charge of stopping a disruption (continually getting off task in a group activity) if the person is in charge of preventing it.

Offer Choices

Choice empowers. Choices give ownership, a critical component of changing behavior.

Ask four questions that lead to a change in behavior

1. What do you want?
2. Is what you are choosing to do helping you get what you want?

3. If what you are choosing to do is not getting you what you want, then what is your plan?
4. What are your procedures to implement your plan; specifically, what will you do?

Encourage Reflection

Ask reflective questions that foster growth and responsibility.

- Are you willing to try something different?
- Are you willing to look at this in a different way?
- How is what you are doing helping you?
- What do you want to be like in this situation?
- What can I do to help you?
- Are you making a friend or pushing a friend away?
- Now that you have _____, how could you repair the situation?
- When you _____, what kind of relationship are you creating with me? (other kids? other adults?)
- What would you have to do if you wanted to move forward in this situation?
- Is there a better choice? What is an example of one?

Practice

Mantras

Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Illness

Kadampa Center for the Practice of Tibetan Buddhism was founded by Lama Zopa Rinpoche in 1992. We pray for the long life and health of Rinpoche. Our prayers have power because there is a Dharma connection.

Buddha Avalokiteshvara - OM MANI PADME HUM

(from FTPM website)

The benefits of reciting the mantra for Avalokiteshvara (Compassion Buddha) are infinite, like the limitless sky. Even if you don't have much intellectual understanding of Dharma, even if the only thing you know is om mani padme hum, still the happiest life is one lived with an attitude free of the eight worldly concerns. If you live your life with the pure attitude free of attachment clinging to this life and simply spend your life chanting om mani padme hum—this six-syllable mantra that is the essence of all Dharma—that's the purest Dharma.

Tara - OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA

(from FPMT website)

In short, OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA means "I prostrate to the Liberator, Mother of all the Victorious Ones." Tara is the mother of all the Victorious Ones, or buddhas.

OM signifies Tara's pure vajra holy body, holy speech, and holy mind
TARE means liberating from samsara, from true suffering, or problems
TUTTARE liberates you from the eight fears
TURE liberates you from disease
SOHA means establishing the root of the path within your heart

There are eight fears related to external dangers from fire, water, air, earth, and also from such things as thieves and dangerous animals. However, the main dangers come from ignorance, attachment, anger, pride, jealousy, miserliness, doubt and wrong views. These eight disturbing thoughts that you have in your mind are the main dangers. TUTTARE, which liberates you from the eight fears, frees you from the true cause of suffering: karma and the all-arising disturbing thoughts.

Buddha Shakyamuni - TAYATA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYAE SOHA

(from FPMT website)

Mantras are said to carry this enlightenment essence in the very sound of the syllables themselves. It's an energetic thing. So, translations can sometimes get in the way of the experience of the energy of the mantra if we focus on the so-called meaning of the words at the expense of simply experiencing the sound that is being generated.

Mantra has been described as "a creative sound considered expressive of the deepest essence of things and understandings" thus the recitation of the mantra "can evoke in a formulaic or even magical way" a transcendent state of mind and energy. Also, "mantra is the pure sound of enlightened speech."

Mantras are almost untranslatable. But, what we can do is interpret the syllables. This is Lama Zopa Rinpoche's interpretation of the Buddha's mantra:

TA YA THA - it is like this

OM - The All-Knowledge of the three bodies of a buddha and of the infinite Buddha's Holy Body, Speech and Mind. The knowledge of the two paths to enlightenment (Method and Wisdom), and of the two truths (Absolute and relative) that contain all existence within them.

MUNI - Control over the suffering of the three lower realms and over the wrong conception of the self-existent I.

MUNI - Control over the suffering of all samsara and over self-cherishing thoughts.

MAHA MUNIYE - Great control over the suffering of subtle illusions and over the dualistic mind.

SVAHA - May my mind receive, absorb and keep the blessings of the mantra, and may they take root.

Medicine Buddha

TADYATA OM BHEKHANDZYE BHEKHANDZYE MAHA BHEKHANDZYE (BHEKHANDZYE)
RAJA SAMUDGATE SVAHA (Sanskrit)

*Tad-ya-ta Om Be-kan-dze Be-kan-dze Ma-ha Be-kan-dze Ra-dza Sa-mung-ga-te
So-ha* (Tibetan pronunciation)

Merit Box

How to Practice with Your Merit Box

(from FPMT website)

FPMT recommends the practice below for generating the most merit while using your Merit Box. At the end of your practice, you may place a donation in your Merit Box.

The Merit Box Practice:

I now clear my mind of all distractions and take refuge in the Three Jewels – Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

In order to reach enlightenment as quickly as possible for the benefit of all sentient beings, I am going to engage in the practice of generosity using the Virtual Merit Box.

Now, I imagine that in the space in front of me appears my immeasurably kind spiritual guide, who is in essence the fully awakened Buddha, in the form of Lama Tsongkhapa or whatever deity I am practicing.

As well, I am surrounded by the numberless suffering sentient beings of the six realms in human form, as far as I can see in all directions. All of these sentient beings have been suffering incredibly since beginningless time, exactly like myself. Thinking like this, I am filled with heartfelt and unbearable compassion for the suffering of all these sentient beings, who have been incredibly kind and have been my mother countless times in my past lives. I am filled with the wish to free them from their sufferings, at any cost, as quickly as possible.

My heart is completely filled with joy that I am able to benefit sentient beings by making a contribution to the projects of the FPMT.

Now visualize your offering benefiting all sentient beings. (Imagine that you are not just offering physical money but offering limitless skies of the most precious offering substances of all kinds to fulfill the wishes and relieve the sufferings of all sentient beings.)

The Buddha appearing in front of me is very pleased and sends forth a rain of wisdom nectar that flows into me and purifies all my obscurations to enlightenment. The nectar also flows into all the sentient beings that surround me. They too are completely purified and satisfied, and they are all transformed into Buddha.

Dedication

I dedicate these merits that in all our future lives I and all mother sentient beings may never be separated from the extremely kind and pure guru, who is the foundation of all good qualities and the only cause of our realizations along the path to enlightenment. Through these merits, may I attain the ultimate state of a guru-buddha in order to bring all sentient beings to that perfect enlightened state.

Prostrations

(taken from *Camp Vajrapani: an FPMT Dharma Family Camp Manual* compiled and written by Bev Gwyn)

When you enter a shrine room, and before you sit down to do meditation, you can show respect for the teachers and the teachings by offering three prostrations. You can do this in a very simple way by just pressing your hands together and bowing your head, or you can actually bend down and touch the floor with your forehead. But the most important thing to do is feel respect for the buddhas and make the strong wish to become like them so that you, too, can give great help to all beings.

This is the way prostrations can be done in the Tibetan tradition. Stand up tall with your head slightly bowed towards the altar. Place your two palms together, tucking your thumbs inside them as if you were holding a precious jewel. Then touch your hands to four places on your body: the crown of your head, forehead, throat, and chest. As you touch each of these four places, think that you will develop all the good qualities and powers of a Buddha's body, speech and mind in order to help others.

Then bend over and place your knees, hands, and then your forehead to the floor. While you are doing this think, "I am going closer to enlightenment."

As soon as your forehead touches the floor, stand up again quickly. As you are getting up think, "I will quickly lead all beings up and out of their suffering."

Repeat this entire action, beginning with touching your four places, a second and third time (or more, if you want), and finish up by touching your four places one last time. Then you can sit down to meditate if you wish.

While you are offering these respectful prostrations, you can also recite different prayers. For example, we often say the following mantra, which as the meaning of taking refuge in the Three Jewels: the Buddha, Dharma, and Sanga:

OM NAMO MANJUSHRIYE
NAMA SUSHRIYE
NAMA UTTAMA SHRIYE SVAHA

When you do prostrations in this way, you are helping get rid of one of our biggest problems: the false pride of feeling better than others, or looking down on others. We are also purifying the harmful things we have done with our body (such as hitting someone or squashing a bug). And by reciting the mantra or prayers we are also purifying our speech. Most importantly, by developing deep respect for the holy beings and their teachings, and wishing we could help others the way a Buddha does, we are purifying our mind.

Blessing Food

Five Contemplations

This food is a gift of the whole universe

May **we**/I be worthy to receive it.

May **we**/I transform **our**/my mind to learn to eat in moderation.

To choose only those foods that nourish **us**/me and prevent illness.

We/I accept this food to sustain **us**/me on the path of understanding and love.

OM AH HUM

Prayers and Special Practices

(taken from *Camp Vajrapani: an FPMT Dharma Family Camp Manual* compiled and written by Bev Gwyn)

Offering Food: A Mealtime Prayer

Visualize the food as a blissful wisdom nectar inside a vast jeweled container, and offer this to a small buddha imagined at your heart, in the following way"

Recite "OM AH HUM" three times and then offer food with one of these:

Tibetan phonetics for pronunciation:

La ma sang gye la ma cho

Day zhin la ma gay dun te

Kun gyi je po la ma cho

Day zhin la ma gay dun te

Kun gyi je po la ma te

La ma nam la cho pa bul

English translation:

The guru is Buddha, the guru is Dharma, the guru is Sangha also.

The guru is the source of all goodness and happiness

To all the gurus, I make this offering of food

English Mealtime Prayer

Thank you, all living beings

For giving us this food

May it nourish us so that

We may nourish others

Saka Dawa

June 15, 2011: Saka Dawa

Saka Dawa is the entire fourth month of the Tibetan lunar calendar. The seventh day of Saka Dawa is the day of the historical Buddha's birth for Tibetans. However, the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and parinirvana are observed together on the 15th day of Saka Dawa, which in 2011 is June 15. Saka Dawa is the holiest time of the Tibetan year and a peak time for pilgrimages.

Saka Dawa

(from FPMT website)

The full moon day of Saka Dawa commemorates Lord Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and parinirvana. As cited by Lama Zopa Rinpoche in the Vinaya text *Treasure of Quotations and Logic*, virtuous actions done on this day are multiplied one hundred million times.

You might consider including children in your Saka Dawa celebrations and reading, *Prince Siddhartha, the Story of Buddha*, by Jon Landaw and Janet Brooks. This is a children's book with beautiful drawings and a simple, accurate telling of the life story of Lord Buddha.

Teaching Ideas

Saka Dawa: birth of Shakyamuni Buddha (Prince Siddhartha)

- Include birth story and, if desired, childhood story
- Stories in *Prince Siddhartha, the Story of Buddha*, by Jon Landaw and Janet Brooks
- Plays for Children – The Birth of a Prince
- Plays for Children – Prince Siddhartha and the Swan

Saka Dawa: Enlightenment

- Stories in *Prince Siddhartha, the Story of Buddha*, by Jon Landaw and Janet Brooks
- Story told in the section titled An Introduction to the practice of Touching the Earth for Children: Mara and Buddha under the Bodhi Tree
- Meditation explained in the section titled Touching the Earth for Young People
- Song with lyrics in the section titled Song for Touching the Earth: There's old Buddha

Saka Dawa: parinirvana (death of physical body)

- Include stories of teachings and death
- Stories in *Prince Siddhartha, the Story of Buddha*, by Jon Landaw and Janet Brooks

An Introduction to the practice of Touching the Earth for Children: Mara and Buddha under the Bodhi Tree

Posted on **August 11, 2008** by Sr. Chau Nghiem

The Buddha was a person, just like you and me. As a prince, he was called Siddhartha Gautama and he lived in the north of India and Nepal about 2500 years ago. He had everything he could want: a beautiful palace, riches, the best foods, luxurious vacations and plenty of power. But he wasn't happy. He knew something important was missing in his life. He still hadn't been able to tame his mind, he hadn't learned how to be peaceful, happy and free. Anger, fear and confusion kept him from being truly happy.

So he decided to become a monk and he went to live and practice in the forest. He had been practicing for six years when he finally felt he was near Enlightenment. He had been feeling more and more peaceful, aware of his thoughts and feelings and was feeling much happier with his simple life, and now he was on the verge of completely breaking through his suffering to total liberation and happiness. So that night, he sat down under the Bodhi Tree and vowed not to get up until he was fully awakened.

But usually whenever we want to do something that is very important to us, we meet challenges. Siddhartha sat in deep concentration under the Bodhi tree and guess who came to disturb him? **Mara**. That's right! The bad guy, the force that pulls us away from what we want, from what we know is right. Mara is out there, but he or she is also inside of us, just like the Buddha is inside each of us. So that night, Mara was determined to prevent Siddhartha from becoming enlightened. So he sent his beautiful daughters and the finest musicians to play and dance for him. In your case, it could be an ice-cream truck passing by, or your favorite TV program or movie. Mara comes in many disguises, and when we really want to focus on something (like our homework, building something, etc) Mara distracts us and tries to pull us away from what we want. But you know what Siddhartha did? He kept sitting peacefully, fully concentrated on his in-breath and out-breath.

Shall we sit beautifully like Siddhartha and breathe in and out quietly to help him resist Mara? And you know what? The dancing daughters and musicians, the ice-cream truck, the TV show, disappeared. So that was Mara's first challenge: **distraction and desire**.

Well, you know Mara didn't give up easily. Next, he sent his army of soldiers on foot and on horseback, all armed with terrible spears, bows and arrows. They lined up in formation and all took aim at Siddhartha. He remained solid, unafraid. Arrows, spears whizzed through the air and lightening speed! But, amazingly, as soon as they came near Siddhartha, they turned into flowers and fell at his feet!

Let's breathe in and out three times like Siddhartha to help him stay calm. And guess what? With this all the soldiers disappeared. Because when we are calm, peaceful and clear-minded, when we have love in our hearts, other people's unkindness doesn't have to hurt us. We don't have to let it wound us or make us angry and sad.

If we know how to look at other people's arrows, of meanness, jealousy, and exclusion, as their misunderstanding, their suffering, then we won't get hit by their arrows. Instead, they will turn into flowers that fall at our feet. So that was Mara's second challenge: **fear**.

Mara wasn't finished with Siddhartha yet, because as you probably know, when we want to do something that is really important to us, the greater the challenges we face. This time Mara used his worst weapon yet: **DOUBT**. He himself came before Siddhartha, and with hands on his hips asked, "What makes you think you can be enlightened? Who do you think you are? You're just a nobody!"

This is a terrible thing to do to someone-make them doubt themselves. We should try our best to speak in a way that gives people self-confidence. Anyway, you know what Siddhartha did when Mara questioned him like this? He wasn't shaken. He sat very still and put one hand down and touched the earth. Let's all do that, one hand in your lap and one hand touching the earth.

Let us breathe three times with Siddhartha, to help him get through this most difficult challenge. Siddhartha calmly said

"I call on the Earth as my witness that I **can** become enlightened."

And right away, the earth shook and the Earth Goddess sprang up from the ground in all her glory and splendor. She put her hand on Siddhartha's shoulder with all her support and love and she looked at Mara "Don't you mess with this Siddhartha here. No, Mara, you are wrong! This monk is going to be enlightened and help all beings find peace and freedom." And with that Mara disappeared, totally defeated.

And sure enough as the morning star appeared in the sky, Siddhartha attained Enlightenment and understood that everyone has the nature of Enlightenment but they don't know it. That means you and me. So this story reminds us that the Earth is always there for us, ready to support us and help us when we have difficulty.

Now we are going to practice Touching the Earth so that we can connect to the people and things that always love and support us. The Earth is so huge and so powerful, we just have to lay our head down on her and rest, relax completely and we will feel her energy and strength come into us. So anytime you feel upset, lonely, scared or confused, go to the Earth. Release your feelings onto the Earth and open yourself up to her support and healing energy.

So after I read one sentence, we'll join our palms and bring them to our forehead, then our heart, in this way uniting body and mind, and then kneel down, resting our forehead on the earth (the child's pose in yoga) with our palms turned up in a gesture of receiving, of openness, of resting, while we listen to and visualize what is being read. When you hear the bell, you stand up and bow. We will touch the earth three times, first to Mother Earth, then to our parents, then to enjoy and appreciate who we are.

Touching the Earth for Young People

Posted on **August 11, 2008** by Sr. Chau Nghiem

Touching the earth is a practice developed by Thich Nhat Hanh to help us connect with the many different aspects of who we are: our blood and spiritual families; the

country we live in; and all beings– animals, plants and minerals. When we are connected to our roots, to all that sustains us, we are happy and solid, no longer isolated and lonely. The following text is a version for young people written by Sr. Steadiness and Sr. Swiftness. For the original text see **Teachings on Love**, by Thich Nhat Hanh.

You may like to introduce this practice by telling the story of Buddha and Mara and how the Buddha took refuge in the earth in a time of difficulty. (See introduction to Touching the Earth).

At the sound of the bell, we breathe in and joining our palms, touch them to our forehead and then our heart. This is to unify our mind and body. Breathing out, we open our palms and bend down, either kneeling and touching our forehead to the floor (the child's pose in yoga), or laying our whole body flat on our belly. We turn our palms upward, in a gesture of openness, receptiveness and surrender. We relax completely and allow the text to enter deeply our body and mind while lying on the ground.

Touching the Earth I see that I Am a Child of the Earth

(bell, children touch the earth)

The earth is like my mom and dad. From the earth I receive delicious foods to eat like wheat to make bread, rice, apples, and carrots, and even chocolate from cocoa beans. The earth gives us material to make our clothes, like cotton and wool from the sheep and wood and stone to make our homes. The earth takes such good care of me. I feel happy to live on the earth.

I feel my body lying on the earth. I feel my arms and my legs and my face touching the ground. I feel that the earth is solid and can support me. I see the earth covered with many plants and trees and beautiful flowers, making the air clean and pure. As I breathe in I can feel the fresh, cool air fill my body. I feel calm and relaxed.

I feel happy and safe on the earth.

(bell, stand up)

Touching the earth I feel connected to my mom and dad

(bell, children touch the earth)

I am the child of my mom and dad. Even though I may not live with both my mom and dad now. I see my mom and I smile to her. I see my dad and I smile to him. I want my mom and dad to be happy. I want them to be safe and free from all worries.

Sometimes, mom or dad gets angry at me, and I feel hurt. Sometimes mom or dad is so busy she or he does not seem to have time for me, and I feel sad. But other times Mom and Dad take care of me and we can laugh and play together, and we have fun. Mom and Dad have taught me so many things, like how to read, or sing, or do math, or make cookies. I feel thankful to them. I know that my mom and dad were children too, a long time ago, and they felt sad and hurt sometimes, just like me. I know they have had many difficulties in their lives, and I don't feel mad at them.

I think of my mom and my dad, and I feel their love and support, and I feel happy. I know my mom and dad need my freshness and my smiles to make them happy too.

(bell, stand up)

Touching the Earth, I am happy to be me

(bell, children touch the earth)

I am a young girl or boy living on the planet earth. Sometimes I feel small like a tiny bug or a spider happily crawling in the grass. Sometimes I feel big, like a huge, old tree. My branches reach up to touch the clouds, and my roots go way down deep in the earth drinking from the water under the ground.

Sometimes I am happy like the sunshine, and I make everyone smile. Sometimes I am sad and lonely like a gray cloudy day, and I just want to hide in a tree and cry. But when I cry my tears are like cool rain on a hot afternoon, and afterwards I feel fresh and new. I know whenever I feel sad, or scared, or mad I can go to the earth and she will always be there for me. The rocks and creatures, the plant and flowers, the sun and the dark starry sky are all there for me. I breathe in the cool, fresh earth. I breathe out all my fears, my sadness, my anger. I accept myself. I accept myself when I am happy and joyful, and I also accept myself when I have difficulties, when I am angry or sad. I smile to myself, and I see that I am a wonderful flower living on the earth. I am a part of the earth, and the earth is a part of me.

(bell, stand up)

Song for Touching the Earth: There's old Buddha

Posted on August 11, 2008 by Sr. Chau Nghiem

You can teach the children this song when you teach them about touching the earth. Or anytime. They love it because its participatory (words in parantheses are sung back by children):

There's old Buddha, sitting under the Bodhi tree (Bodhi Tree)
There's old Buddha, his mind as quiet as it could be (it could be)
Sittin' like a wise old frog (frog)
Sittin' like a bump on a log (log)
Sittin' with a smile on his face (face)
Kinda like empty space
Doesn't mind rain, doesn't mind thunder
What could bother old Buddha I wonder? _____ (kids suggest something that might bother Buddha)
He wasn't bothered by _____ (2x)
He let that _____ just roll on by, just roll on by!

<http://mindfulkids.wordpress.com/>



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PARENT FAQ - PRESCHOOL

What do I need to bring with me?

A sippy cup labeled with your child's name. Without them, we have lots of spills and throw away paper cups.

Do you need snacks?

Always! Suggestions: goldfish, pretzels, snap pea crisps, larger cereal (such as puffins), veggie chips

Things to avoid: refined sugar, food coloring, nuts

Fresh options are great. If you can plan ahead by sending the Program Coordinator an email, we'll know you are the only one bringing fresh food. If not and we end up with extra, we have a fridge to store extras, and you can take them home with you.

What do I do when I arrive?

Check in your child. Make sure you know the volunteers for the day. It helps to remind volunteers every time if your child has allergies or has not yet been exposed to a certain type of food.

What options do you have for my infant or young toddler?

We have a lovely space for children aged four and under, but we do not have a room dedicated to infants. Most parents find that a flexible approach works best during the first year.

- Sleepy? Infants often snuggle with their parents in the gompas. Toddlers who have not dropped their morning nap may love the beginning of the class but find it hard to get through the whole thing without their parents.
- Hungry? Parents often use the preschool room to nurse or feed their babies.
- Playful? Often infants love to watch the preschoolers, even if they are not ready to leave their parents. Parents keep their infants, but come visit.
- Independent? Some infants are very comfortable in the preschool room and able to stay and play without their parents.
- Depends on the day? Some mornings the preschool room is very active and others, very mellow. Some parents decide the best approach depends.

How do you handle bathroom breaks and dirty diapers?

When a child needs to use the restroom, a female volunteer takes the child to one of the stalls in the women's room.

The volunteer makes sure the child has what he or she needs, such as a stool or potty seat

Volunteers do not assist children in using the bathroom.

Volunteers do not change diapers.

Volunteers will retrieve parents for dirty diapers and/or bathroom assistance.