

# Outdoor Preschool Family Handbook

2015-2016

A nature-based early childhood education program  
for children ages 3½ -5

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## Mission Statement

The mission of Outdoor Preschool is to provide children ages 3½-5 with time to explore and discover nature, learn how to take care of themselves, and how to respect themselves, each other, and the Earth. Our program strives to cultivate an inclusive community of learners and ecologically conscious citizens through nurturing strong, respectful partnerships among children, adults and the natural world.

We value and advocate for families' voices, diversity, unique perspectives and expert knowledge of their children. Outdoor Preschool gives equal treatment and access to our program and to our current or prospective employees without regard to race, gender, color, religious creed, national origin or ancestry, ethnic group orientation, medical condition, age, socioeconomic status, marital status, family structure, disability, pregnancy or sexual orientation.

## Philosophy

The Outdoor Preschool program combines play-based and child-led philosophies based on:

- valuing children as competent individuals capable of healthy risk-taking
- nurturing children's curiosity, creativity, and way of learning through play
- believing meaningful, hands-on interactions with nature help children grow as independent thinkers, compassionate community members, and earth stewards.

Educators are gentle facilitators and mentors of children's learning, providing stimulation and support only as needed. The program is flexibly structured to balance the needs of individual children, along with the needs of the group. We acknowledge, encourage and respect that diversity strengthens our community. Our program strives to create an equitable and just environment for children and their families by actively challenging prejudice and injustice. Educators help children have safe and productive discussions of similarities and differences while also reflecting on their own cultural and social identities, attitudes, strengths and challenges.

## Typical Daily Schedule

The program operates Monday through Friday 8:30am to 1:15pm or 3:30pm, except for national holidays and other scheduled closures (see School Calendar). A lead educator and an assistant educator work with a maximum of 9 children, which allows for low staff to child ratios of 1:4½. *Predictability and routine are very important for young children, in addition to flexibility based on children's needs.* Our program will have similar routines each day, but may vary slightly depending on the environment and children's needs on that particular day.

8:30-8:45am	<b><u>Drop-off/Arrival</u></b>	Sign-in, morning check-in*, hand-washing, bathroom visits, clothing check
8:45am	<b><u>Morning Circle</u></b>	Greeting, weather observations, safety reminders as needed**
9:00-10:00am	<b><u>Outdoor Exploration</u></b>	Child-led play, sensory awareness, hazard identification as needed**

10:00-10:30am	<b><u>Morning Snack</u></b>	Organic, vegan snack provided outside
10:30-12:00pm	<b><u>Outdoor Exploration</u></b>	Imaginative play, music, navigation and mapping
12:00-1:00pm	<b><u>Lunch</u></b>	Food/table preparation, sharing circle
1:00-1:15pm	<b><u>Reflection</u></b>	Storytelling, stretching, drawing
1:15pm	<b><u>Pick-up</u></b>	Sign-out, afternoon check-in*
1:15-2:30pm	<b><u>Rest/Quiet Time</u></b>	Napping, quiet books, mark-making
2:30-3:00pm	<b><u>Afternoon Snack</u></b>	Organic, vegan snack provided, yoga
3:00-3:30pm	<b><u>Yard Play/Pick-up</u></b>	Sign-out, afternoon check-in*

*\*Morning and Afternoon Check-ins*

Morning Communication is essential to ensuring a positive experience for your child. Please inform an educator upon arriving at school if your child did not sleep well during the previous night, refused breakfast, etc., so that we may be better informed at helping them during the day. Educators will communicate with families and caretakers in the afternoons to share unusual, as well as usual events from the day's activities.

*\*\*Hazards and Safety Awareness*

Educators help children identify and learn about potential environmental hazards that exist outside. As a group, we discuss the potentially dangerous object or area and we work together to mark it and create a boundary for future reference. Sometimes educators use a whistle to ask all children to stop where they are and respond with their immediate attention. We regularly share the First Aid Backpack with children and call their attention with songs and rhymes when needed. Educators practice many safety routines, including daily risk assessments of the tools and the environment. While there are unique hazards associated with outdoor learning, safety is our top priority. Please read the Hazards section for additional information related to insect stings and ticks.

## **Curriculum**

Educators synthesize a wide variety of scientific research, prominent developmental theories, and world-wide philosophies to inform an open-minded, innovative and nurturing anti-bias approach to working with young children. We prepare children for future learning by developing positive social identities, confidence, self-awareness and self-regulation alongside peers in a safe and trusting environment.

Each day of our program is guided by children's play, interactions with their environment and daily routines. We provide children with ample free time for unstructured play, which is a child's primary mode of learning. Educators encourage experiential, hands-on learning, which allows children's play, imagination and imitation to guide everyday work. The physical

environment is an unlimited source of rhythm, meaningful patterns and daily inspiration. Our objectives are to:

- offer children a dynamic, safe, and engaging culturally responsive environment
- support the whole child including their physical, emotional, social and cognitive development and well-being
- develop foundational skills: critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, cooperation, social and environmental responsibility

We regularly incorporate Spanish songs and vocabulary, the use of photos, videos, fine arts materials, music as well as natural materials found on our grounds. Throughout the year, children contribute their work to a portfolio as evidence of their progress in the program. The portfolio is used during conferences to reference a child's work and is always accessible for families to see.

### **Skill Development Guide**

#### **Environmental Science/Nature Awareness:**

Children will develop knowledge of:

- weather patterns
- plant, animal and fungi life cycles
- how to care for the physical environment
- species identification when it is relevant and of interest to the children

*Ex. Each day children observe the weather conditions outside through experiencing first-hand how the plants and animals change and adapt throughout the seasons.*

#### **Play:**

Educators will observe children's interests in activities, as well as their approach to play, including:

- imitation-based, fantasy play
- independent, parallel, collaborative play
- creativity, risk assessment and risk management
- sensory integration, physical coordination
- object manipulation
- physical motor skills (Gross motor: body awareness, flexibility; Fine motor: grip, hand dominance)

*Ex. When children play by pretending to put on a concert using sticks and stumps, they are engaging various senses, along with physical coordination and social collaboration skills.*

#### **Routines/Transitions/Self-Help:**

Daily routines and transitions offer opportunities for children to develop:

- confidence, independence and self-care
- self-esteem, perseverance and flexibility
- executive functions and ability to transition

- ability to listen, make eye contact, follow directions

*Ex. Transitions, particularly during indoor to outdoor environments are important times for children to dress themselves appropriately which requires planning, making choices and persistence.*

### **Social and Emotional:**

**Through daily interactions with peers and educators children will develop:**

- positive self-identity, empathy
- ability to understand and respect differences
- conflict-resolution and collaboration
- awareness and articulation of feelings
- self-regulation, self-discipline and impulse control
- adaptability and resilience

*Ex. Community Reflection Meetings and Sharing Circles encourage children to voice their opinions and feelings while also listening to others.*

### **Cognitive:**

**Language-** Children will explore and develop language cognition using:

- verbal and nonverbal communication
- receptive and expressive language
- reasoning and respectful articulation of feelings and plans with others

*Ex. Active storytelling occurs everyday in the program and engages children through asking questions about a story's plot, character and setting along with questions regarding children's predictions and thoughts.*

**Literacy-** Children will practice literacy cognition through:

- print awareness and letter recognition
- ability to identify and produce letter sounds
- rhyme
- mark-making (writing and drawing)
- understanding, relating to and communicating oral and written stories

*Ex. The Children's Sign-in sheet enables children to explore mark-making and the meaning of print in their everyday routine.*

**Numeracy-** Children will practice numeracy cognition through:

- shape and color identification
- sorting, sequencing and counting
- number recognition, patterning
- one-to-one correspondence

*Ex. Collecting acorns and fallen leaves for pretend food among children enables individuals and groups to have an authentic experience with sorting and counting.*

**Social-** Children will engage in social cognition by developing:

- ability to recognize social situations
- interpret feelings and intentions
- show and understand empathy
- listen to others and express feelings safely and productively, especially when dealing with disappointment

*Ex. The Montessori concept of a Peace Flower is used regularly when children are experiencing peer conflicts. The Peace Flower allows children to own their feelings and feel empowered by their ability to share their thoughts with others while understanding the importance of listening and respecting others. (See Behavioral Guidance below for more information on Peace Flowers)*

## **Behavioral Guidance**

Educators are dedicated to developing strong relationships with children and families in order to best support children's healthy development. We also communicate explicit expectations, appropriate boundaries and respectful limit setting with children. By maintaining a safe and secure environment for all children, it is less common to observe oppositional behavior. The Outdoor Preschool environment is designed to offer every child a wide space to explore, unhurried time, plenty of materials, and appropriate modeling from compassionate and supportive adults.

When a child seems stressed, withdrawn or exhibits unsafe or puzzling behavior, we want to address the most common causes: Is he/she tired? Did he/she eat and drink enough? Has there been a change in routine at home or at school? When it is clear that a child needs more support, our program provides children with reasonable 1:1 time with an adult. Every child has a right to their feelings, but not a right to hurt others. We will incorporate physical restraint if a child is in danger of severely injuring him/herself or others. We use breathing techniques and peaceful spaces for taking a break when needed. Additionally, community meetings can help children resolve issues as a group.

Children are encouraged to resolve their own peer to peer conflicts. For example, children can use the Peace Flower as a part of their own conflict resolution process with peers. This tool is used in Montessori classrooms and has shown many positive results for children as it helps them slow down, share their feelings and listen to others from a place of empowerment. The Peace Flower is similar to a Talking Stick which allows children to take turns and voice their feelings independently.

## **Challenges and Support Process**

We strive to develop trusting and open relationships with families in order to best support children's development. We want to talk with families about important issues like consistency between home and school, age-appropriate expectations, and changes in routines. Educators make daily observations of all children's development and we need families' observations from home in order to best meet children's needs at school. Families routinely seek out educators for support at one time or another for challenges great and small. Please reach out and share any observations, thoughts and concerns you have. We will actively work with families to explore and find effective strategies for home and school environments that support children exhibiting puzzling and/or

challenging behavior, and children with different abilities.

When educators have multiple observations of puzzling, unsafe or unhealthy behavior, we will be in daily communication with the family to discuss strategies and ongoing progress. If we feel that we cannot continue providing safe, accessible and quality care for all children in the program, we will ask the family to seek additional support from specialists. Children and families benefit tremendously from obtaining extra support before a child enters grade school and risks falling further behind. Specialists work with educators and families to help assess and support children with puzzling or challenging behavior and different abilities. We will not seek referrals without written permission from the family. Although our goal is to support all children in our program, Outdoor Preschool reserves the right to terminate a child's enrollment at anytime or to ask that a family withhold their child from the program until additional support can be arranged.

If deemed appropriate, an IEP (Individualized Education Program) will be created in partnership with specialists and implemented as soon as possible. Outdoor Preschool is proud to partner with Children's Integrated Services (CIS) and specialists during the school day. When strategies have been exhausted by the program staff after partnering with additional specialists and a child's progress or behavior has not improved his/her participation to an acceptable level for the needs of the child and overall program, educators will communicate with the family to discuss how to appropriately transition the child to a more supportive environment.

There are many advocacy and support groups for families in the area. Please reach out to an educator for more information regarding early intervention services, parent education, advocacy and support groups, professional referrals, and information around IFSPs (Individualized Family Service Programs) and IEPs (Individualized Education Programs).

## **What to Bring**

*Each day, children should be prepared with the following items and gear:*

- Child is wearing appropriate clothing and gear (see Dressing for the Weather below)
- Child has small backpack with:
  - a full water bottle
  - healthy, zero waste lunch
  - sunscreen, lip protectant, insect repellant (if you want reapplication in the afternoon)
  - small handkerchief in pocket (for nose wiping)
  - empty plastic bag for wet clothes
- Child's cubby is stocked with extra clothing, as needed, in a plastic bag (see Extra Clothing below)
- Nap time blanket and pillow are stored in cubby (if child is enrolled in full day program)

## **Dressing for the Weather (required!)**

*"There is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate gear."*

Outdoor Preschool is an outdoor preschool. We will spend most of our time outside each day, in rain, snow, or shine, so please be prepared for your child's clothes to get wet and dirty! Children and adults must be dressed appropriately in order to be comfortable and to gain the most out of each day in the program. An educator will be available upon arrival to help ensure that children are appropriately dressed for the day's weather conditions. **If children do not have appropriate**



**gear and clothing, he or she will not be able to participate in the program.**

When choosing appropriate gear, please keep in mind, Outdoor Preschool encourages and supports all children to be able to dress and relieve themselves each day. Children will be assisted to relieve themselves appropriately outside when a toilet is not accessible and it is best not to have the child undress entirely in order to squat. *For example, bib-style rain or snow pants must fit over the child's jacket, not underneath, so that he/she may easily pull down their pants for toileting.* If you have concerns, need assistance finding or affording gear, please ask an educator for additional information and help.

*Limitations to Time Outdoors:* If weather conditions drop below 15 degrees or above 90 degrees Fahrenheit, there is heavy precipitation, thunder, lightning or high winds, children's time outdoors will be limited. Educators follow exposure recommendations from the NOAA website for wind chill factors and frostbite risk. Outdoor Preschool has many options for indoor activities that help children build connections with nature. Our indoor space is designed to feel like a home rather than a classroom and has many natural materials to stimulate and engage children's curiosity.

### Required Clothing and Gear

<b>A Note About Shoes</b>	Please work with your child to wear shoes/boots that are comfortable and functional in outdoor settings. <b><i>Open-toe shoes, such as flip flops are prohibited.</i></b> Crocs are discouraged for outdoor play. <i>Please leave a pair of slippers (crocs are OK) at school for children to wear indoors.</i>
<b>Cold Weather Gear</b>  <i>Layer, Layer, Layer!</i>	<b>Top:</b> Long-Sleeve Wicking Shirt (ex. wool or fleece long underwear), Long-sleeve Insulation Layer (ex. wool or fleece sweater), Vest, Waterproof Jacket with Hood (snow skirt is helpful), Warm Hat, Neck warmer or Balaclava, Insulated Mittens, Waterproof Mittens <b>Bottom:</b> 1-2 pairs of Insulated Pants (ex. wool or fleece long underwear), Waterproof Pants (can be bib-style if worn over jacket), Gaiters or Cuffed Pants for snow, 1-2 pairs Wool socks, Insulated Waterproof Boots  <Wool blends and synthetic fabrics wick sweat and moisture and dry more quickly compared to cotton blends.
<b>Warm Weather Gear</b>	<b>Top:</b> Fully-Brimmed Sun Hat, Long-sleeve Wicking Shirt, Light Insulation Layer, Vest, Waterproof Rain

	<p>Jacket with Hood, Bug headnet (optional)</p> <p><b>Bottom:</b> Long Wicking Pants, Waterproof Pants (can be bib-style if worn over jacket), Synthetic or Wool Socks, Lightweight Sneakers when it's dry, Waterproof Boots and closed-toe Sandals for splashing</p> <p>&lt;Lightly colored, brown and grey pants and long-sleeve shirts are best for sun and bug protection.</p>
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### Extra Clothing

Please ensure that your child's cubby always has 1-2 complete changes of clothes with a minimum of: 2 pairs of wool or synthetic socks, 2 pairs of underwear, 1 long-sleeve shirt, 1 short-sleeve shirt, 1 pair of pants, 1 pair of mittens, preferably waterproof and 1 warm hat. ***Please write your child's first name and last initial on all of your child's clothing and gear tags.***

## School Procedures and Policies

### Arrival and Dismissal

The school day runs from 8:30am until 3:30pm. The state requires families to Sign-in at the time of children's drop-off and pick-up times, so please ***use Outdoor Preschool's Sign-in and Sign-out sheet twice each day*** your child attends the program. Please also indicate if someone other than a parent or guardian will be picking up your child. *Please note: If you would like to speak with an educator or director for more than a minute or two or if you would like to speak privately, please reach out by email or phone to schedule a specific time to meet.*

Drop-off: An educator will greet you and your child in the morning and have you sign-in. Please say goodbye to your child by 8:45am, so the program's activities can begin promptly and smoothly for all. Thank you for your support and please reach out to an educator with any questions or if you'd like assistance at drop-off.

Pick-up: Please arrive promptly to pick up your child. We cannot extend pick-up time. In extenuating circumstances, please notify the school by phone as soon as possible. Families may be subject to late pickup fees and will be notified in advance.

*Under the laws of the state of Vermont, both parents may have the right to pick up their child unless a court document restricts that right. The enrolling parent who chooses not to include the other parent's name on the authorized list for pick-up must file an official court document such as the following: current restraining order, sole-custody decree, divorce decree stating sole custody, judgment of adoption, foster parent documentation. Absent this documentation, the program may release the child to either parent, provided that parent documents biological or adoptive parenthood of that child. The parent must provide the program with updated legal documents when any changes occur.*

## Snacks and Meals

Children are provided a morning and afternoon snack of organic fruit, crackers and/or organic vegetables. Snacks are always vegan, meaning they do NOT contain animal products: no dairy, egg or meat. *Lunch is NOT provided* and should be brought from home. We recommend zero-waste lunches that use reusable packaging and promote healthy eating habits. An ideal lunch will be balanced and contain mostly natural whole fruits, vegetables and grains. Thermoses of soup can be especially tasty during cold weather months. Please avoid using glass containers for food.

## Nap Time

Preschool-aged children enrolled in full day programs for more than 5 hours per day must be given an opportunity to rest quietly for at least 30 minutes. Children will be encouraged to carry out nap time procedures on their own, with assistance and adaptations from educators as needed. Our typical nap time procedure is outlined below.

- establish a comfortable sleep space for child (may be assigned by an educator)
- child gets blanket and soft toy (if applicable) from their cubby
- child takes off their shoes at their space
- child looks at or listens quietly to a book while sitting or laying down at their space
- when music begins, children put their books down, lay and rest quietly
- after 30 minutes has elapsed, children may begin to look at books and/or draw quietly

## Hazards

While there are unique hazards associated with outdoor learning, safety is our top priority. Beyond conducting daily risk assessments of the natural environment, all lead and assistant educators are First Aid and CPR Certified. Ticks and insect stings are the most significant hazards associated with outdoor programs. Below you will find important information regarding how we respond to such hazards.

### Ticks

Ticks are very small arachnids and typically completely harmless; however some can transmit disease which can lead to serious illness. Ticks are prevalent and active during warm weather months when the temperature is 40-45 degrees Fahrenheit and above. Even during hot summer days, children and adults involved in the Outdoor Preschool program must wear long pants, tall socks, long-sleeve shirts and wide-brimmed hats. This type of gear and clothing will help prevent ticks from finding exposed skin to latch on to. A tick bite is not painful and can easily go a few days unnoticed. ***It is imperative that families check their children's bodies each day for suspected tick bites. If your child has been bit by a tick, use tweezers to remove it by grasping straight up and down onto the head (head will be closest to the skin) and pull straight up.*** An indication of a serious illness, Lyme Disease, is a small red ring around the tick bite. Wash the affected area with soap and water and save the tick in a small ziploc bag with a paper towel soaked in mouthwash or alcohol. The alcohol will kill the tick and the bag will save it for identification, if needed. If you believe your child has concerning symptoms, contact your doctor right away.

### Bees and Wasps

While bees and wasps are not known to sting unless provoked (and we routinely discuss safe boundaries with living creatures with children), children may encounter a bee or wasp sting. All educators are aware of children with known allergies and will carry appropriate treatments. For children who have no known allergies to insect stings, educators will be vigilant in observing signs and symptoms of an adverse reaction. As stated in the enrollment papers, educators will contact family in the event of an emergency and will contact emergency services first if needed. In most cases, children respond to insect stings with localized pain and inflammation that can be soothed with an ice pack, warm attention and hugs.

### **Conferences and Communication**

Outdoor Preschool offers conferences for families twice a year, typically each fall and spring. While primary caregiver responsibilities are shared among two educators, each child is assigned a primary staff person to be responsible for conferences and portfolios. The conference will address your child's progress and any questions you may have. Informal meetings can be arranged at anytime throughout the year.

Families are asked for their preferred method of communication during the enrollment process. In addition to daily check-ins at drop-off and pick-up, educators will communicate with families through monthly email newsletters and daily blog posts (available in print by request) that describe and document classroom activities. *Please communicate with an educator if there have been any life changes in the household and to update contact information as needed.*

### **Family Involvement**

Families are always welcome and encouraged to visit the school, share with children and join us on our outdoor excursions. Since we are often outside exploring or on a hike, ideally, families will let us know when they want to visit, so we can be sure to spend time effectively together. Do you have a special hobby, skill, language or story that you would like to share? Would you like to help us with garden projects? Outdoor Preschool loves to have visitors help out and teach us new things.

We ask that families who are visiting, dress appropriately for the weather, including wearing similar items that we ask children to wear in order to model appropriate gear. Also, please keep in mind the following school policies when participating in Outdoor Preschool:

- *Adults do not help children climb higher than the child can climb by him or herself.*
- *We avoid picking up items that are still alive.*
- *Children may take home pieces that are smaller than a finger and inanimate.*
- *We can use sticks as long as the child has enough space.*
- *Smoking is prohibited on all school property.*
- *Visitors will not take any pictures or videos of the children in our program*

### **Media and Toys**

Outdoor Preschool asks children and families to leave toys and screen media at home. We have found that if children are struggling during drop-off, it is best to comfort them with hugs, to

remind them of the plan for pick-up and to follow through with confidence. Sometimes during exceptional circumstances, personal items such as a family photo, handkerchief, or small soft toy can be kept with the child as a comfort piece to aid in transitions. We also ask families to refrain from bringing toys or commercial gifts to school during birthdays or holidays. Please ask an educator if you would like additional information regarding our approach to media and toys.

### Traditions and Birthdays

Outdoor Preschool celebrates classroom traditions that emerge and grow from our community and the natural world around us. We strive to reflect diverse cultural and social identities that empower children and families and resist prejudice and bias. We welcome families to share traditions that reflect their family life or cultural identity. We look forward to partnering with families to find simple, meaningful and developmentally appropriate ways to include these traditions in the program.

We like to acknowledge children's birthdays by offering to bake a classroom snack as a class. The child celebrating a birthday chooses ingredients to make their treat special and unique. Please avoid bringing gifts or party favors to school. We ask families not to bring in birthday party invitations/cards unless all children in the class are included.

### Health and Illness

When a child (or educator) is unable to comfortably participate in the day's activities and is showing serious signs of illness or injury, we share responsibility with families to exclude that person from the program in order to protect children's health and prevent the spread of disease in our community. Educators will contact parents or guardians if a child needs to be picked-up early. If parents or guardians are unavailable, educators will contact additional Emergency Contacts. If symptoms require immediate medical attention, educators will contact emergency services and inform families as soon as possible.

***Please contact Outdoor Preschool if your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease, so we can ensure a safe and healthy environment for all families. We always keep medical information confidential, so we will never link your child's name to a diagnosis.***

Symptoms that must be cleared by child's doctor before returning to the program	axillary (armpit) <b>fever</b> over 100°F, persistent <b>diarrhea</b> (uncontrolled or 5x in 8hrs), <b>vomiting</b> twice in 24hrs, <b>severe coughing</b> (over 10 days), <b>conjunctivitis</b> (or pink eye), ear <b>drainage</b> , <b>sores</b> in mouth or nose
Diagnoses that require notifying child care program	Campylobacter, Chicken pox, Cryptosporidiosis, E. coli, Giardia, Head lice, Hepatitis A, Ringworm, Scabies, Impetigo, Hib, Measles, Mumps, Whooping cough (Pertussis), Rubella, Coxsackie Virus, Salmonella, Shigella, Fifth Disease, Strep Throat, Tuberculosis

*Above information has been taken from "Inclusion And Exclusion of Ill Children in Child Care: Guidelines for Common Signs and Symptoms, Illnesses And Conditions Related to Contagious Diseases" by the Vermont Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Vermont Department of Health.*

### **Medication**

If your child needs prescription or over-the-counter medication during school hours, a permission form must be filled out by the family, including instructions for dosage, possible side effects, and a description of how the medicine should be administered. Please talk with an educator if you need to fill out a permission form for your child's medication.

### **Absence/Vacation**

Please contact Outdoor Preschool at your earliest convenience by text, email or phone when your child will not be attending due to illness or a planned absence.

### **Emergency Closings and Emergency Preparedness**

The program will follow local public school closings and will do its best to alert families of Emergency Closings via email or phone no later than 7am on the day of closing. In case of emergency during the day, children will be evacuated and parents will be notified as soon as possible.

A complete first aid kit and emergency preparedness plan are kept in educators' backpacks and in the classroom. The backpack also contains emergency contacts, food, water, blankets, books and mark-making materials. All injuries will be communicated to families and a record of injuries will be kept. At minimum, there is always one First Aid and CPR Certified adult working with children. Please inform the director if your child needs medical attention due to an injury that occurred while at school.

### **Confidentiality and Privacy Policy**

Outdoor Preschool keeps all records and information about your family strictly confidential and private. We abide by Vermont's privacy laws and will release records of information about your family when required by law. This includes releasing information to the Child Development Division, Department of Children and Families, police, and health care professionals. Other than these legal requirements, we will release records of information about your family only with your written permission. The following records of your child are available for your inspection at any time: enrollment forms, medical records, immunization records, attendance records, assessment records, and incident reports. Please contact the director to schedule a time to view these records and/or if you would like to review the Privacy and Confidentiality policy for staff.

### **Statement of Commitment**

Outdoor Preschool is committed to upholding our legal, professional, and ethical responsibilities to children, families, and educators. We are committed to following all state child care licensing standards and mandated reporting standards for child abuse and neglect\*. We are also committed to following the professional and ethical standards of the NAEYC's Code of Ethics (revised in 2011) and the Code of Ethical Conduct (2006). Copies of all licensing rules and ethical standards are available from the director.

\*By law, it is a responsibility and requirement for all early childhood educators to report suspected child abuse and neglect to the Department of Children and Families.

### **Safe Departure and Parking Policies**

At Outdoor Preschool, it is the primary responsibility of the educators to ensure your child's safety. When an educator observes a family member or guardian picking up a child without a properly installed car seat or observes that family member, guardian or authorized adult is unfit to transport a child, the educators have the responsibility to ask and encourage the person to arrange an alternative transport plan. Educators will try to contact a person on the Authorized Contact lists. If unavailable, a taxicab will be arranged and fares will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian. If alternative transportation is refused by the family member, guardian or authorized adult, the educator will contact police and may file a report with the Department of Children and Families.

Please turn your car off when dropping off and picking up your child.

### **Enrollment**

- 1) **Initial Contact:** Interested family contacts Outdoor Preschool
- 2) **Site Visit:** Family and child visit school campus, receive Curriculum Guide+Family Handbook- Director meets with family, Educator interacts with child
- 3) Family **Submit an Application for Enrollment**, including \$45 application fee
- 4) If offered a space in the program, **submit an Admission Form + Enrollment Contract, immunization record** and required **payment**
- 5) **Home Visit:** Educator will visit your home to help build connection with family and child, and to help family prepare gear and clothing items
- 6) **Orientation:** 30-60 minute overview of program routine, expectations, and important policies, events and questions

### **Schedule of Tuition and Fee Payments**

There is a non-refundable \$45 registration fee that must accompany all Application for Enrollment forms. Families must renew these forms each year and submit the fee upon contract renewal. If enrollment is full and the child is deemed to be a good match for the program, families may be waitlisted until a space becomes available. The Director will contact waitlisted families according to their place on the waitlist with earliest applications being notified first. There is a non-refundable holding rate due upon enrollment into the program for families wanting a space to be held for their child more than two months in advance of their child's starting date.

A non-refundable tuition deposit of the last month's tuition is due upon return of the Admission Form and Enrollment Contract. Tuition can be paid using one of the payment plans below:

- 1) Annual payment, paid at least two weeks in advance of starting classes
- 2) Session payments, paid at least two weeks in advance of the start of each session
- 3) Monthly payments, paid at least two weeks in advance for the first month, then subsequent payments are due on the 15th of each month thereafter

There is a \$20.00 late fee for payments made 7 days overdue and a \$25 NSF (non-sufficient funds) fee for returned checks. Please contact us as soon as possible to discuss a special payment plan if needed. To learn more about economic subsidies and tax breaks that might be available to you, call: 1-800-479-6151 or visit the [Vermont Childcare Subsidy](http://www.brightfutures.dcf.state.vt.us) website at: <http://www.brightfutures.dcf.state.vt.us>.

If tuition is over one month late, we will use your last month's tuition for the unpaid month and your child's enrollment will end.

Outdoor Preschool accepts, personal checks (payable to Outdoor Preschool), bitcoin and cash payments. When paying by check, please write your child's name and tuition month on the memo line.

### **Notice of Schedule Change**

At Outdoor Preschool, we will do our best to accommodate requested schedule changes from families. A written request is required 2 months in advance of a change in schedule in order to give the program time to adapt. No refunds will be given for dates missed due to illness, vacation, national holidays, and inclement weather.

### **Notice of Withdrawal**

A written request must be submitted 2 months prior to the withdrawal date in order to give us enough time to fill the space. If we fill the space before 2 months is through, you may have the opportunity to withdraw earlier. If sufficient notice is not given prior to withdrawal, families are still required to pay for all scheduled days corresponding to the full 2 month period.

### **Transitions/Transfers**

Outdoor Preschool can help transition a child between programs by offering collaboration and information sharing between educators with parental permission. Educators will work with families to create a plan to help the child prepare for a transfer in a way that is consistent with his/her ability to understand the change.

### **Additional Information**

If you are unable to access the internet and you would like to read more about program information and regulations, please visit your local library or talk with an educator to request use of the Outdoor Preschool computer.

Vermont Early Childhood Regulations can be found at:

[http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/cdd/care/Licensed Family Child Care Regulations.pdf](http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/cdd/care/Licensed%20Family%20Child%20Care%20Regulations.pdf)

Vermont Early Learning Standards can be found at:

[http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/cdd/care/2006-03-29-VELS booklet.pdf](http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/cdd/care/2006-03-29-VELS%20booklet.pdf)

### **No Babysitting Policy**

Educators cannot babysit for families whose children are enrolled in our program.

If families choose to bypass the No Babysitting Policy, a "hold harmless" agreement may be signed by the director, educator and family before babysitting services are rendered.



### Concerns, Complaints and Positive Feedback

We want to hear about your experience in our program. Please share concerns, complaints and feedback with an educator or Director. If you feel uncomfortable engaging with an educator or the Director, you may call the Child Care Consumer Concern Line: 1-800-540-7942. This resource can also provide families with information about child care regulations and regulatory histories of individual child care programs.

### School Calendar

School is Closed on the following dates for 2015-2016:

<b>Summer Session: June, July August</b> 1 Holiday, 7 Vacation	<b>Fall Session: September, October, November</b> 3 Holidays, 4 Vacation	<b>Winter Session: December, January, February</b> 4 Holidays, 3 Vacation	<b>Spring Session: March, April, May</b> 1 Holiday, 6 Vacation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Vacation: 1 day in June</li><li>● Independence Day: July 4th</li><li>● Vacation: 6 days at end of August</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Vacation: 4 days in September</li><li>● Labor Day: 1st Monday in September</li><li>● Columbus Day: 2nd Mon in Oct</li><li>● Veterans Day: November 11th</li><li>● Thanksgiving Day: 4th Thurs in Nov</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Christmas Day: Dec 25th</li><li>● Vacation: 3 days in Dec/Jan</li><li>● January 1st: New Years Day</li><li>● Martin Luther King Day: 3rd Monday in Jan</li><li>● President's Day: 3rd Monday in Feb</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Vacation: 5 days in March</li><li>● Vacation: 1 day in May or April</li><li>● Memorial Day: last Monday in May</li></ul>

### Staff Directory and Important #s

Location: Corner of

Address: 127 Forest Hill Rd Anytown, VT 02213

Owner, Director, Lead Educator: Annabelle Knight

Cell phone #: (207) 409-2792

Email: [annabelle.knight@gmail.com](mailto:annabelle.knight@gmail.com)

Assistant Educator:

Cell phone #:

School Website:

Community and State Services

Local Library:

WIC:

Child Care Consumer Concern Line: 1-800-540-7942  
Children's Integrated Services (CIS):

*To report suspected abuse, maltreatment, or neglect of a child, call:*

Child Abuse Hotline: 1(800) 649-5285 or visit:

[http://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/reporting\\_child\\_abuse](http://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/reporting_child_abuse)

Child Support Helpline: 1-800-786-3214