

# Forest School Family Handbook

2015-2016

A year-round nature immersion program  
for children ages 3½ -6

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## Mission Statement

Forest School offers an early childhood environmental education program that nurtures children's holistic development and lasting connections with nature. We support a diverse and inclusive community of children and families who respect and care for themselves, each other, and the Earth.

Forest School gives equal treatment and access to our program and to 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

Forest School believes in child-centered, inquiry and play-based educational philosophies. Our guiding principles are:

- Children are competent, capable, and resilient
- Nature stimulates children's curiosity
- Relationships are foundational to learning

We believe children develop respect and compassion for themselves, each other, and the environment when given opportunities to take risks, make connections, explore, and discover their world. We understand that children's innate curiosity invites meaningful context for inquiry-based learning and outdoor immersion inspires children's imagination, creativity, and practical skill development. Our program provides a trusting and supportive environment for children to develop self-confidence, empathy, social and environmental responsibility.

Educators practice anti-bias approaches to learning to promote equity, justice and social responsibility, so that all children feel empowered to reach their full potential. In addition to being respectful caregivers, educators act as gentle facilitators, mentors, and co-learners supportive of each child's unique identity, strengths, and challenges. We value and advocate for families, their diversity, unique perspectives and expert knowledge of their children.

## Typical Daily Schedule

The program operates Monday through Friday 8:30am to 3:30pm, except for national holidays and other scheduled closures (see School Calendar). We aim to enroll 6-9 children during the first year, so the maximum staff to child ratio is 1:6 while the minimum is 1:4½.

*Predictability and routine are very important for young children, in addition to flexibility.* Our program will have similar routines each day, but may vary slightly depending on the environment and children's individual and group needs on that particular day.

8:30-9:00am	<b><u>Arrival and Sign-in</u></b>	Children use the bathroom, wash hands, and check-in before outdoor play
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9:00-9:15am	<b><u>Greeting</u></b>	Sing a welcome song, share weather observations and discuss adventure plan for the day
9:15am-12:15pm	<b><u>Outdoor Adventure</u></b>	Hike to base camp with time for imaginative play, sensory exploration, hazard identification* (healthy snack provided)
12:15-1:00pm	<b><u>Picnic Lunch</u></b>	Children eat lunch brought from home and reflect on morning activities with the group
1:00-2:00pm	<b><u>Rest/Quiet Time</u></b>	Educators share books, oral stories, and provide soft cots and art materials
2:00-3:30pm	<b><u>Outdoor Exploration</u></b>	Project work, dramatic play, and snack provided. Children wash hands and check-out before departing

*\*Hazard Identification: Please see Safety and Hazards for more information*

### **Curriculum**

The curriculum emerges from children's interests, relationships, daily routines, and play. The physical environment is an unlimited source of rhythm, patterns, and inspiration for small and large group projects and investigations that incorporate science, math, language arts, social studies, and creative arts. Children's daily experiences include opportunities to create, explore, and learn about similarities and differences among people while challenging stereotypes and bias with critical thinking and problem-solving. Educators incorporate high-quality learning methods and materials including literature, songs, fingerplays, fine arts materials, musical instruments, natural materials found in nature, and developmentally appropriate technology.

### **Assessment**

Educators document children's progress using portfolio-based assessment. Portfolio entries include pieces of work, photos, videos, and written notes collected over time by educators and children. Throughout the process, children are encouraged to self-reflect on their learning journey and feel proud of their individual growth. Educators use their expertise in child development and examine current research to inform appropriate learning goals (i.e. scientific reasoning, mathematical thinking, language, communication, social, emotional and physical development).

### **Learning Objectives**

Children will practice skills and develop knowledge at their own pace.

#### **Literacy:**

- demonstrate awareness of environmental print and concepts of print
- practice distinguishing sounds through rhyming and alliteration

- develop mark-making (i.e. writing and drawing)
- develop awareness of letter-sound correspondence
- comprehend, relate to, and communicate oral and written stories
- identify important elements of a story

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

#### Mathematics:

- practice sorting, sequencing, classifying, and counting
- manipulate and visualize two and three-dimensional objects
- develop number recognition, patterning, quantifying and comparison
- demonstrate one-to-one correspondence and spatial awareness
- make predictions, use tools to gather information, and problem-solve

*For example, children practice sorting and counting when they collect acorns and leaves for pretend food during imaginative outdoor play.*

#### Environmental Science:

- observe and engage with plants, animals and fungi
- use senses to gather information
- practice scientific inquiry (i.e. form hypotheses, conduct experiments, and analyze results)
- recognize weather patterns, characteristics of matter, and cause and effect relationships
- practice stewardship of the physical environment

*For example, in the morning children share weather observations and check that they have appropriate clothing for the day's adventure.*

#### Social Studies:

- articulate knowledge of self, family, classmates, and local community
- develop confidence, positive self-identity, and family pride
- express comfort and joy while using accurate language for human diversity
- develop knowledge of place by recognizing geographic characteristics and forming relationships with indigenous communities

*For example, Sharing Circles provide opportunities for children to share information about their families by bringing in a photo(s) and talking about who is in their family.*

#### Creative Arts:

- explore and represent ideas with a variety of visual and performing art (i.e. music, movement, dance, drama)
- compare and contrast colors, shades, textures, and characteristics of natural materials
- express creativity with new and familiar methods and materials

*For example, educators provide water and paint brushes for children to use and explore however they choose; whether it's to make a magic potion, paint a tree, or create a sculpture .*

### Social-Emotional:

- build relationships with others, show and understand empathy
- recognize unfairness, use language to describe it and understand that it hurts
- practice self-awareness, adaptability, and resilience
- practice non-violent conflict resolution, advocacy, and collaboration
- listen to others and express feelings safely and productively, especially when dealing with disappointment

*For example, daily group Reflection meetings offer children time to share their thoughts and feelings with others while also listening to and respecting others' ideas and thoughts.*

### Physical:

- practice risk assessment and risk management
- develop sensory integration and physical coordination
- build gross motor (body awareness, flexibility)
- develop fine motor (grip, hand dominance, object manipulation)
- demonstrate self-help and self-care, persistence and perseverance

*For example, the outdoor play environment engages various senses and improves physical coordination by providing dynamic and diverse textures and surfaces to explore.*

### Language and Communication:

- practice verbal and nonverbal expression
- practice listening and following multi-step directions
- develop receptive and expressive language
- reason and respectfully articulate feelings and plans with others

*For example, educators facilitate engaging fingerplays and songs with children in English and Spanish.*

### Cognition:

- initiate independent and collaborative learning
- develop executive functions (i.e. attending and engaging, planning, prioritizing, organization)
- practice keeping track of belongings and self-regulation
- develop higher-order thinking (i.e. memory recall, flexibility and inventiveness in thinking, making connections)

*For example, in the afternoons children practice stretching and yoga while being encouraged to think, plan, and reflect on their body positions and breath awareness.*

## **Behavioral Guidance**

Educators are dedicated to developing strong, trusting relationships with children and families that focus on healthy social-emotional development. The Forest School environment is

organically designed to support children's engagement by offering substantial physical space, unhurried time, plenty of imaginative materials, and appropriate modeling from compassionate adults. We use positive methods of guidance that support children's self-direction, positive self-esteem, and cooperation.

Educators communicate explicit expectations, appropriate boundaries, and respectful limit setting. When a child seems stressed, withdrawn or exhibits unsafe or puzzling behavior, we address the most common causes: Are they tired? Did they 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.

Educators validate children's feelings and help them find ways to express themselves safely and appropriately. We incorporate deep breathing and peaceful spaces for taking breaks and calming down as needed. Community meetings are used to share concerns and resolve issues within a group. Children also use the Peace Flower, a Montessori concept, to help resolve peer-to-peer conflicts. The Peace Flower, like a Talking Stick, allows children to take turns describing their feelings and listening to others from a place of empowerment. Every child has a right to their feelings, but not a right to hurt others. We will use physical restraint only if a child is in danger of severely injuring oneself or others.

### **Challenges and Support Process**

Children benefit at school when educators and families partner together to focus on a child's well-being. Educators make daily observations of children's development and we need families' observations from home in order to best meet children's needs at school. It is often helpful for educators and families to discuss topics like consistency between home and school, age-appropriate expectations, changes in school and home routines, and families' goals for their children.

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 also reach out to families for advice regarding what works best at home. We look forward to working together to explore and find effective strategies for home and school environments that support children with various abilities, puzzling and/or challenging behavior.

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 inside and outside school 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, Forest School 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. Forest School partners with Children's Integrated Services (CIS) and other child development specialists during the school day. When strategies have been exhausted by the program staff and a child's participation has not improved 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, caregiver 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:*

- Child has small backpack with:
  - a full water bottle
  - healthy, whole-foods based, zero waste lunch whenever possible
  - non-aerosol sunscreen, DEET-free insect repellent, and lip protectant (Please apply to your child in the morning. We will re-apply 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)

## What to Wear

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

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.

When choosing appropriate gear, please keep in mind that we encourage and support all children to be able to dress and relieve themselves each day. Children will be assisted 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 they 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. There are many affordable and local resources that can 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. We have many options for indoor activities. Our indoor space



is cozy, home-like, and has many natural materials to stimulate and engage children's curiosity.

### Clothing and Gear Guide

<b>Shoes</b>	Please work with your child to wear shoes and boots that are comfortable and functional in outdoor settings. <b><i>Open-toe shoes and sandals (i.e. crocs) are not suitable for outdoor play.</i></b> Please leave a pair of slippers (crocs are OK) at school for children to wear indoors.
<b>Cold Weather Gear</b>  <i>Layer, Layer, Layer!</i>	<b>Top:</b> Long-Sleeve Wicking Shirt (i.e wool or fleece long underwear), Long-sleeve Insulation Layer (i.e 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 (i.e. wool or fleece long underwear), Waterproof Pants (can be bib-style if worn over jacket), Gaiters or Cuffed Pants for snow, 2 pairs of Wool Crew Socks, Insulated Waterproof Boots ● <i>Wool blends and synthetic fabrics wick sweat and moisture, and dry more quickly compared to cotton blends.</i>
<b>Warm Weather Gear</b>	<b>Top:</b> Sun Hat, Long-sleeve Wicking Shirt, Light Insulation Layer, Vest, Waterproof Rain Jacket with Hood, Bug Headnet (optional) <b>Bottom:</b> Long Wicking Pants, Waterproof Pants (can be bib-style if worn over jacket), Synthetic or Wool Crew Socks, Lightweight Sneakers when it's dry, Waterproof Boots and closed-toe Sandals for splashing ● <i>Lightly colored, brown and grey pants, and long-sleeve shirts are best for sun and bug protection.</i>

### Extra Clothing

Please ensure that your child's cubby always has at least one complete change of clothes, plus an extra pair of underwear, and in winter: extra socks, mittens (preferably waterproof) and a warm hat. ***Please write your child's first name and last initial on all of your child's clothing and gear.***

## School Procedures and Policies

### Drop-off and Pick-up

The school day runs from 8:30am until 3:30pm. Families are required to sign their children in at drop-off and pick-up, so please ***use the Sign-in and Sign-out sheet twice each day*** your child attends the program. Please also indicate if someone other than the primary family members or guardians will be picking up your child.

*Drop-off:* An educator will greet you and your child in the morning as you sign-in and wash hands. Please say goodbye to your child by 9:00am, so the program's activities can begin promptly. 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, personal items such as a family photo, handkerchief, or small soft toy can comfort the child during transitions. Please reach out to an educator with any questions or if you'd like assistance during morning drop-offs.

*Pick-up:* Please arrive promptly to pick up your child, sign-out, and help them wash hands before leaving school. 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.

\*Daily check-in/outs (1-2 minutes in length) are essential to ensuring a positive experience for your child. Please inform an educator upon arriving at school how your child is feeling and if there are any changes at home, so that we may better support your child at school (e.g. change in sleeping or eating patterns). Educators will communicate with families and caregivers in the afternoon to share unusual, as well as usual events from the day's activities. A significant change or disruption at home (e.g. new baby, divorce) could benefit from a more in-depth conversation about how to best support your child while they're away from home. *If you would like to speak privately with an educator or director, please reach out by email or phone, and we will schedule a time to meet.*

### **Snacks and Meals**

Forest School provides a morning snack around 10am and an afternoon snack around 2:30pm. Lunch around 12pm, *is NOT provided* and should be brought from home. Meal times are enjoyed while sitting in a circle on the ground, or family-style at picnic tables, so children practice serving themselves. Children will be asked to sit calmly while eating. When a child shows signs of being full, such as playing with their food, an educator will gently remind them to listen to their body and clean-up if they are feeling full.

We recommend zero-waste lunches that have reusable packaging and promote healthy eating habits. An ideal lunch will be portable and contain natural whole fruits, vegetables, and grains. Please avoid using glass containers. Forest School will not refrigerate children's lunches or heat food in a microwave. To keep perishable foods fresh, refrigerate lunch overnight and pack it with two freezer packs in the morning. To keep food warm, a thermos is a good option.

School snacks are posted weekly and will include: fresh water, fruit, vegetables, and whole grains. When possible, we source local food that has been grown using organic practices. We will work with families to ensure that children with allergies, restrictions and sensitivities are provided with healthful options. Products served to children, such as cider, will be pasteurized.

### **Nap Time**

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 looks at or listens quietly to a book while sitting or lying down at their space
- when music begins, children tuck away their books, lay and rest quietly
- after 30 minutes has elapsed, children may begin to look at books and/or draw quietly

### **Hazards and Safety**

Children thrive when experiencing a balance of routine activities and exciting new challenges. Under the close supervision of caring and experienced educators, children learn and grow through play and healthy risk-taking. While there are unique hazards associated with outdoor learning, safety is our top priority. All lead and assistant educators are First Aid and CPR Certified, and help children identify and learn about potential environmental hazards. As a group we discuss potentially dangerous objects or areas and we work together to create safe boundaries.

Educators practice daily safety routines including conducting daily risk and benefit assessments of tools and the natural environment, always carrying a cell phone, asking that all children be within sight of an adult, and using whistles and songs to alert children when needed. Below you will find important information regarding how we respond to the most significant hazards in outdoor environments: ticks and insect stings.

#### 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 Forest School program are encouraged to wear long pants, tall socks, and long-sleeve shirts. Participants are always asked to wear 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 families 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**

We offer conferences for families at least twice a year, typically each fall and spring in November and April. The conference will address your child's developmental progress and any questions you may have. Additional 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 daily blog posts and occasional newsletters (available in print by request) that describe and document classroom activities and upcoming events. *Please communicate with an educator if there have been life changes in the household and to update contact information as needed.*

## **Family Involvement**

The most important family involvement happens outside of school, at home. Some meaningful ways to support your child's education and development include engaging your child in conversation about their activities at school, reading together, and modeling learning at home.

Conferences occur twice per year (see Conferences and Communication) and once per year we use a formal survey to gather feedback from families regarding their program experience.

Families are 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? We love to have visitors help out and teach us new things.

We ask that families who are visiting, dress appropriately for the weather, including wearing and modeling appropriate sun protection (i.e. wearing sun hats). Also, please keep in mind the following school policies when participating in our program:

- *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.*

## **Commercial Clothing, Media, and Toys**

Forest School aims to provide a commercial-free learning environment for children and families. We ask you to leave commercial clothing, toys, and screen media at home, including refraining from bringing commercial gifts to school during birthdays or holidays. Please ask an educator if you would like additional information or if you have questions about this policy.

## **Traditions and Birthdays**

Forest School 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, with collaboration from the child's family, by creating a Birthday Book. Educators help children record what they like about the birthday child and work together to compile it with art into a book. *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

Forest School is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy learning environment. We use only non-toxic cleaning solutions and disinfectants that are effective and safe for children and families. Children and educators wash their hands regularly upon arrival at school, before eating, after going to the bathroom, upon departure, and after sneezing, coughing, and nose-blowing into their hands. When proper toileting facilities are not available, educators assist children in going to the bathroom outside (with respect to privacy, hygiene, and environmental impact) using liquid soap and water to wash hands afterwards. At times, non-toxic hand sanitizer spray and wipes may be used in place of liquid soap and water.

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 families if a child needs to be picked-up early. If family members 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 inform the director if your child needed medical attention due to an injury that occurred while at school.

***If your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease, please let us know so we can ensure a safe and healthy environment for all families. We will never use your child's name in connection to a diagnosis.***

Children exhibiting the following symptoms must be cleared by child's doctor or be symptom-free without medication (i.e. fever reducer) for 24 hours 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 our 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 your child needs medication to be administered during school hours.

### **Absence/Vacation**

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

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

The program 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 families 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 drawing materials. All injuries will be recorded and communicated to families. There is always at least one First Aid and CPR Certified adult working with children.

### **Confidentiality and Privacy Policy**

Forest School 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 only 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 express 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**

Forest School is committed to upholding our legal, professional, and ethical responsibilities to children, families, and educators. We are committed to following all state early childhood 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.

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

It is the primary responsibility of the educators to ensure your child's safety when in our care. When dropping off or picking up your child, please turn your car off and check-in with an educator before leaving.

## Enrollment

- 1) **Initial Contact:** Interested family contacts Forest School
- 2) **Site Visit:** Family and child visit school campus, receive Family Handbook
- 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
- 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 application fee that must accompany all Application for Enrollment forms. A non-refundable tuition deposit of the last month's tuition is due upon return of the Admission Form and Enrollment Contract.

If the child is a good fit for the program, but there are no spots available, families may be waitlisted until 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.

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) 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. No refunds will be given for dates missed due to illness, vacation, national holidays, and inclement weather.

*Forest School accepts, personal checks (payable to Forest School), bitcoin, cash, and credit card payments. Credit Card payments have an additional fee to cover card-company transaction fees.*

*When paying by check, please write your child's name and tuition month on the memo line.*

## 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 two 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 two month period.

## Transitions/Transfers

Educators will work with families to create a plan to help children prepare to transition or transfer to new schools in a way that is consistent with the child's ability to understand the change. We can also help by offering to collaborate and share information between educators when we have a family's permission.

## 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 school computer and internet. Links to resources and the VT Early Learning Standards can be found at the school website. Additionally, the Vermont Early Childhood Regulations can be found at: [http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/cdd/care/Early\\_Childhood\\_Program.pdf](http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/cdd/care/Early_Childhood_Program.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: June, July, August</b> 1 Holiday, 4 Vacation, 1 PD	<b>Fall: September, October, November</b> 4 Holidays, 1 Vacation 1 Half-day for conferences?	<b>Winter: December, January, February</b> 4 Holidays, 1 Vacation	<b>Spring: March, April, May</b> 1 Holiday, 4 Vacation, 1 PD, 1 Half-day for conferences?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Vacation: 1 day in June</li><li>● 1 Professional Development Day in June</li><li>● Independence Day: July 4th</li><li>● Vacation: 3 days at end of August</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Labor Day: 1st Monday in September</li><li>● Indigenous People's Day/ Columbus Day: 2nd Mon in Oct</li><li>● Veterans Day: November 11th</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Christmas Day: Dec 25th and 1 day in December</li><li>● January 1st: New Year's Day</li><li>● Martin Luther King Day: 3rd Monday in Jan</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Vacation: 4 days in March</li><li>● 1 Professional Development Day in April or May</li><li>● Memorial Day: last Monday in May</li></ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Day of Mourning/ Thanksgiving Day: 4th Thurs in Nov</li> <li>● Friday after</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● President's Day: 3rd Monday in Feb</li> </ul>	
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### **School and Local Contact Information**

Location: located at the intersection of xxx Rd and xxx Rd. in xxx, VT.

Street Address: 60 xxxl Rd. xxx, VT 05443

Mailing Address: 60 xxxx Rd. xxx, VT 05443

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: [www.preschool.herokuapp.com](http://www.preschool.herokuapp.com)

### Community and State Services

*If you have questions or concerns about a child care provider or program in Vermont, call the:*

Child Care Consumer Helpline: 1-800-649-2642

*or the Child Care Consumer Concern Line: 1-800-540-7942*

*To report suspected abuse, maltreatment, or neglect of a child, call the Child Abuse Hotline, 24hrs a day, 7 days a week: 1(800) 649-5285 or visit: [http://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/reporting child abuse](http://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/reporting_child_abuse)*

To learn about economic benefits that may be available to you call: 1-800-479-6151

To learn about issues related to child support, call the Child Support Helpline: 1-800-786-3214

To learn about Vermont Children's Integrated Services (CIS), visit:

<http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/cis> or call:

Burlington Contact: Ann Dillenbeck (802) 860-4426 [ann.dillenbeck@chittendencis.org](mailto:ann.dillenbeck@chittendencis.org)

Middlebury Contact: Sue Bloomer (802) 388-3171 [sbloomer@addisoncountypcc.org](mailto:sbloomer@addisoncountypcc.org)

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children(WIC):

<http://healthvermont.gov/wic/>