

FERN

FLOWER

Nature School

Parent Handbook

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Fern Flower - Nature School
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This Parent Handbook is intended to familiarize staff members with current Fern Flower - Nature School policy, practices, and standards. An electronic version (PDF) of the handbook is available on our website at www.fernflownatureschool.net. A print copy of the handbook is available upon request. Fern Flower - Nature School reserves the right to revise its policies, practices, and standards as deemed appropriate by the Director/s. Staff members will be notified of updates to the staff handbook as they occur.

General Information about Fern Flower - Nature School



Nature School

Name of the Facility: Fern Flower - Nature School

Address: 3827 Charlton Drive, Qualicum Beach, V9K 1Z3, BC, Canada

Phone Number: 250-299-2054

E-Mail: fernfloweratureschool@gmail.com

Our Programs for 2.5 to 6 years old:

- Our Morning Sessions (Monday to Friday) start at 8:00 a.m. and end at 12:15 p.m.
- Our Afternoon Sessions (Tuesday to Thursday) start at 12:45 p.m. and end at 5:00 p.m.

Directors' Names: Lera(Valeriya) Lucas

Philosophy: Forest/Nature School with Play Based Learning, Reggio Emilia and Waldorf Approaches.

Introduction

Message from the Director

Welcome to Fern Flower - Nature School, a place rich in dialogue, collaboration, discussion, pedagogical excellence, and of course Nature. We invite you into this diverse community, where families, children, and educators are free to share and engage others in discussing the values that they hold about children, early childhood education, nature, practical life skills, connection to the land, and various ways of knowing. Thank You and Welcome!!!

Lera Lucas

Mission

Our mission is to use the Nature and Forest School model to bring children closer to nature in the early, primary, and secondary years. By cultivating rich learning experiences, children will make a connection with the diverse natural environment our locations have to offer.

Our vision is for your child to play and learn within our local forests with a knowledgeable and experienced educator who understands the importance of play and inquiry-based learning and how this can lead to a healthy child and a more sustainable world.

Our Educators Certified British Columbia ECE and ECEA, with Outdoor Specialists (Forest School Level 1, 2 and 3), guide children to self-learning and discovery in a ratio of one teacher to eight students or less!

About Fern Flower - Nature School

The Fern Flower - Nature School is conveniently situated at 3826 Charlton Drive, just next to Rose Park. It's about a 5-minute drive south of Bowser or a 20-minute drive north of Qualicum Beach. Our "Home Base" features a log circle set in close proximity to a forest clearing, surrounded by outdoor provocation areas and a natural playscape. From this central point, we have easy access to explore over 1,000 acres of crown land, including the Lighthouse Country Regional Trails, Nile Creek Enhancement Society (Fish Hatchery), and the local Beach.

Established in 2024, Fern Flower - Nature School became a vibrant hub where young students settled into the site and surrounding forest. Their discoveries, explorations, adventures, and artwork quickly transformed the area into a place that felt like home.

Currently, we offer both Morning and Afternoon Nature School Sessions catering to a diverse group of children aged 2.5 to 6 years.

What is a Forest or Nature School?

Forest School is an educational approach, and program of delivery, that has existed since the late 1950s, with thousands of programs expanding the world over, starting in Denmark and Sweden, moving through Scandinavia, onto Europe, China, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and now Canada. Although, Forest School is called by many different names (e.g., Nature Kindergarten, Outdoor School, Waldkindergarten, Rain or Shine School, Bush School), in Canada, two prominent names are taking hold: Forest School and Nature School. In this guide, we have chosen to refer to our work as Nature School (NS) to reflect what is happening in Canada to date.

In NS, children spend anywhere from a half day to a full day outdoors in local woodlands and green spaces, in various urban and near-urban parks, natural spaces adjacent to or on school grounds, or natural playgrounds and outdoor classrooms. Children attending NS have the opportunity to learn in a natural environment regularly. Some programs are offered to students one half-day per week, whereas other schools and early years Nature Schools have embraced this approach on a more full-time basis, with students spending the majority of their days outdoors.

Two main features separate Nature School from other outdoor and environmental education programs. As described above, NS can happen on a part-time or full-time basis; and it can also take place in a variety of contexts, and environments, with varying age groups, and in different climates.

Despite variations, all Forest and Nature School programs adhere to the following: regular and repeated access to the same natural space, as well as emergent, experiential, inquiry-based, play-based, and place-based learning. The defining feature of this type of nature-based education program is that children are provided with opportunities to build an ongoing relationship with the land, with a dedicated educator, with one another, and with themselves through this educational approach.

The activities that happen in Forest and Nature School vary and can depend on the following circumstances: the season, the community context, climate, landscape, animals that have visited the night before, trees that have blown down in the wind, the kinds of provocations elicited by the educator, the kinds of tools and loose parts provided, the children who are in attendance, how long the group has been formed, and—most importantly—what interests the child(ren). Sometimes children work independently, finding solace in their own worlds and creations and ponderings. Other times children work collaboratively to create, problem-solve, support one another, and dream of a bigger and better world. NS is often described as a “magical” thing to witness, as it’s often a microcosm of collaboration, communication, trust building, and a working model of consensus building.

Forest and Nature School touches on all subjects and disciplines: At any given moment an experience can cut across math, science, art, literature, physical education, etc. Skilled educators in NS will often plan their lessons at the end of a session, (also known as “backward lesson planning”), and will know what curriculum standards they need to meet on any given day. The learning outcomes are based on real-time explorations and experiences, rather than predetermined concepts in books or on screens, done within the four walls of a classroom.

The Nature School Ethos

Children’s experiences with learning are defined by their capacity for inspiration, innate sense of exploration, a strong desire to learn through play, and their level of engagement with their surroundings. In Fern Flower - Nature School, a walk in the woods becomes a fantastical adventure where curiosity and fascination guide a child’s spirit of enchantment; where a stick takes on a thousand magical meanings; where learning ebbs and flows, crossing multiple subject areas; and where the process is valued as highly as an outcome.

Intimate and meaningful connection with the natural world through Nature School helps develop a sense of “heart knowledge,” which helps children tread the landscape — figuratively and literally — moving from “I know” to “I care”. Helping children recognize themselves as an important part of a larger whole encourages them to develop an ethic of care towards themselves, others, and the more-than-human world.

Forest and Nature School Principles:

Multiple principles of learning need to be considered when implementing Forest and Nature School programs. These principles can help form the foundation upon which broader learning objectives and curriculum requirements rest.

Why Outside?

We spend our days in the woods and creeks, where children learn through their own exploration – and it’s developmentally appropriate! Keeping it local gives students an appreciation of all the wonders of their own backyards. As we immerse our learning community in the same outdoor setting regularly, students develop a lasting connection with (and respect for) nature.

Forest and Nature School:

- takes place in a variety of spaces, including local forests, creeks, meadows, prairie grasses, mountains, shorelines, tundra, natural playgrounds, and outdoor classrooms.
- is a long-term process of regular and repeated sessions in the same natural space.
- is rooted in building an ongoing relationship with place and on principles of place-based education.
- is rooted in and supports building engaged, healthy, vibrant, and diverse communities.
- aims to promote the holistic development of children and youth.
- views children and youth as competent and capable learners.
- supports children and youth, with a supportive and knowledgeable educator, to identify, co-manage and navigate risk. Opportunities to experience risk are seen as an integral part of learning and healthy development.
- requires qualified Forest and Nature School practitioners who are rooted in and committed to NS pedagogical theory and practical skills.
- requires that educators play the role of facilitator rather than an expert.
- uses loose, natural materials to support open-ended experiences.
- values the process is as valued as the outcome.
- requires that educators utilize emergent, experiential, inquiry-based, play-based, and place-based learning approaches.

Aboriginal Perspective

There is a teaching in every part of creation. It is our task to find it, learn it, and apply it.

- late elder Ken Goodwill (the First Nations University of Canada, n.d.)

Although Nature School is relatively new to Canada, Aboriginal people have been offering sophisticated, land-based education to their children on this land for millennia. The content of that education varies from place to place with the diversity of the Nations that live here in Canada. However, there are some similarities between them. Like Forest and Nature School, Aboriginal approaches to education emphasize experiential learning, and peer-to-peer learning, and require people to take responsibility for their own learning. When educators use Aboriginal pedagogy in their classrooms and let the students know that what they are doing has Aboriginal roots, it helps create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sharing, it helps Aboriginal children and their families to feel more welcome in the school, and it helps non-Aboriginal children to develop a healthy, positive understanding of their Aboriginal neighbors. With at least 15,000 years of intellectual tradition and educational experience on this land, Aboriginal education can lend a great deal to Forest and Nature School, making NS all the richer, more locally appropriate, and more representative of a diversity of traditions.

Forest and Nature School offer students and educators the chance to find joy in learning from connecting to each other and the environment, the chance to experiment with new activities, honour and respect our place in the natural world, and observe and learn about nature as it surrounds us.

Aboriginal pedagogy makes use of wonderful, interactive approaches to learning. Probably the most commonly known Aboriginal pedagogy is teaching through stories and anecdotes. Traditionally, legends and lore were used in the winter only, and this is still true today in some stories. However, many traditional stories have been written down and can be used any time of the year to help engage students. There are also new stories that have been authored from an Aboriginal point of view. (Some great books to start with are listed in the resources section of this guidebook). Aboriginal stories include history as told from an Aboriginal perspective and personal stories. While there is a serious taboo in many Aboriginal cultures against telling someone else's personal story without their permission, educators often refer to their own experiences to help their students learn.

Observation and emulation are also important ways of teaching and learning for Aboriginal peoples. Mentoring was and is still a significant part of learning practical skills, traditional roles, and ceremonies. Above all, Aboriginal pedagogy is Nature Schooled on observation of nature and trying to learn the lessons that plants, animals, and natural systems can teach us. In most Aboriginal cultures everyone was and is considered equal and the primary focus is on the community. The role of educator and learner can change throughout the day, depending on who has more knowledge of a given task. Elders, of course, are held in high esteem for their wisdom and knowledge and can be a vital resource for communities and individuals.

What happens during Nature School Day?

Typically, small groups of individuals (depending on the child/adult ratio) take part in five days a week of sessions lasting for over four hours and fifteen minutes. The sessions involve practical hands-on activities which aim to build up participants' skills, abilities, and confidence week by week.

All sessions are designed and led by our trained staff, with the help and direction of our Fern Flower - Nature School practitioner. However, Nature School strongly encourages participant-led learning, so as the week progresses, learners are given more freedom and responsibility to explore their interests and therefore initiate and direct their own learning.

Fern Flower - Nature School uses natural resources to stimulate imagination, creativity, and investigation. Activities can include:

- Shelter building
- Natural art
- Using knots and lashings
- Fire lighting
- Animal tracking
- Bug hunts
- Tree investigations
- Climbing and balancing
- Woodwork using tools, e.g.,
- Creating bug homes and bird feeders
- Collecting, identifying, and sorting natural materials such as leaves
- Team games

Most activities are curriculum-linked and span several subjects, including Math, English, Design and Technology, Science, Music, Cooking, Singing and Art.

What sort of Activities do the Children do?

Activities are linked to the topic that the children are covering that term. Typically, these may include:

- 🌿 Music and Movement – Keeping a pulse or copying a rhythm pattern by beating sticks together, learning songs, and singing and dancing as a group.
- 🌿 Design Technology and Science – Building dens and bridges that are suitable for them to sit in and walk on, whittling wood, making wooden disks.
- 🌿 Language and Literacy – Storytelling around the fire, Writing, following instructions, and creating story maps with natural objects.
- 🌿 Math – Data handling, Measuring, Shapes, and Problem-Solving
- 🌿 Art – Creating 3D pictures or sculptures out of clay or mud, color matching, and making our own charcoal to draw with!
- 🌿 Fine Motor – involves the use of the small muscles that control the hand, fingers, and thumb; also, promotes eye-hand coordination.
- 🌿 Gross Motor – It involves the coordination of the arms, legs, and other large body parts and movements, nevertheless, movements such as running, crawling, swimming, or hopping.
- 🌿 Community Building – Participating in a community bonded by attitudes, values, and goals is an essential ingredient to enjoying a fulfilling life.
- 🌿 Cooking – Cooking not only builds confidence and prepares a kid for difficult life situations, but it also teaches them to think on their feet. It also develops the same type of discipline as any form of sports or martial arts.
- 🌿 Sensory - Sensory play is an important part of childhood and, within reason, there are really no limits to what you can use in sensory activities. Nature can often be your best friend when it comes to sensory play!

The Benefits of Nature School

Why is Forest and Nature School important? And why now? Well, two pressing concerns make Nature School more important than ever. First of all, research shows that youth participation in outdoor activities has declined. It has gotten to the point that, for instance, in the Canada and U.S. the average child spends “as few as 30 minutes of unstructured outdoor play each day, but more than seven hours each day in front of an electronic screen. While it’s tempting to write this off as a problem unique to North America, children’s activities outside school are strikingly similar across nations. The second — and closely related — concern is that childhood obesity rates have increased and prescriptions for childhood mental health problems (like ADHD) have skyrocketed.

While obesity and poor mental health are complex problems, researchers believe that—among children — more screen time and less physical and outdoor play are among the causes. As the National Wildlife Federation (2014) puts it, “Our kids are out of shape, tuned out and stressed out, because they’re missing something essential to their health and development: connection to the natural world.” The evidence suggests that viewing, interacting with, and living in natural environments can have multiple effects on reducing stress, increasing patience, increasing self-discipline, increasing capacity for attention, and increasing recovery from mental fatigue, or from crisis and psychophysiological imbalance. In a timely way, Forest and Nature School weaves together many elements that help counteract the physical and psycho-social deficits linked to a sedentary lifestyle and disconnection from nature. By including outdoor play, Forest and Nature School can heal and strengthen children’s bodies through increased physical fitness, higher levels of vitamin D, and better eyesight. NS can also heal and strengthen children’s minds and relationships: environmental education is linked to better performance in math, reading, writing, and listening and better critical thinking skills; and exposure to nature can reduce ADHD symptoms. Play and exposure to green spaces can also reduce children’s stress levels, protect their emotional development, and enhance their social relations. By exposing children to areas rich in biodiversity where they can learn about environmental issues hands-on, Nature School can help children become well-informed and caring stewards of the natural world.

Potential Benefits of Participating in Forest and Nature School:

- Improved confidence, social skills, communication, motivation, and concentration.
- Improved physical stamina, fine and gross motor skills.
- Positive identity formation for individuals and communities.
- Environmentally sustainable behaviors and ecological literacy.
- Increased knowledge of the environment, increased frequency of visiting nature within families.
- Healthy and safe risk-taking.
- Improved creativity and resilience.
- Improved academic achievement and self-regulation.
- Reduced stress and increased patience, self-discipline, capacity for attention, and recovery from mental fatigue.
- Improved higher-level cognitive skills.
- Male Inclusion in Education.

Our Nature School of Conduct

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| <i>Entering the Forest</i> | We will enter the Forest respectfully and know that when at Nature School specific expectations are in place. We will explore, investigate, learn and play in a manner that will not damage our Forest environment. We understand that we share our Nature School with plants and animals and that when we are in our Nature School, we are sharing the environment with them. |
| <i>Walking on a Street and Crossing</i> | At FFNS Teachers will wear safety vests during the off-site outings. On big outings, we will have at least 2 educators helping during the day. During the walk, one teacher will be in front, and the other teacher will be in the back, also children will be in between holding hands if needed. If FFNS needs to cross the street teachers will use the STOP/SLOW sign to stop the traffic and cross safely. |
| <i>Boundaries</i> | <p>Before each session begins children are made aware of how far they can explore. We do have lots of fun beneath the trees. If children move to explore hidden areas an adult should also move into the cover deep enough to be able to see the children but allow the children, the freedom to explore independently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🍃 If you lose sight of a child shout '1, 2, 3, where are you?' The children have been taught to respond '1, 2, 3, I am here', or signal in other ways if non-verbal. This enables the leader to trace children who have strayed. 🍃 Also, we may play a game "Green Means - Go!": <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green – Run • Yellow – Walk • Red – Stop • Purple – Come Back <p>Usually, we use this technique during the walk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🍃 At NS we use the phrase/concept "If you can't see me - I can't see you", so usually that encourages all kids to look at the educator. |
| <i>Lighting a Fire</i> | When lighting a fire, the Forest School Leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we start. A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point. A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place. Open fires will be built within a fire square/circle. |
| <i>At the Fire Circle</i> | An open fire will be lit within a fire square or stone circle. A fire circle using log sitting stools may be established around the perimeter, 2.0m from the fire square. No one may enter the fire circle perimeter unless invited to do so by an adult. There is no running past the fire circle. No items must be carried and placed within the fire circle unless by an adult. If you wish to move around the fire to a new stool, you must step out of the circle and walk around the outside of the log circle. Even when the fire is unlit, we will treat it as if it is lit. |
| <i>Picking up and Playing with Sticks</i> | Children can carry sticks shorter than their arm's length but are encouraged to think about how close they are to other children. Longer sticks may be dragged or carried with the help of another person when each person is at either end. Sticks must not be thrown. Sticks must not be pulled from living tress. |
| <i>Digging</i> | Digging large holes is not encouraged. Children may carefully move soil to look for insects and their habitats using fingers or small sticks found within the forest, but deep holes should not be made. |

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| <i>Using Tools</i> | All tools have their own clear code of conduct for correct use which will include consideration of specific personal protective equipment, correct use of a specific body posture, and consideration of the appropriate types of activity that each tool may be used for. Tools are only will be used in the designated areas with the educator's full supervision until the tools are cleaned and put away in the toolbox which will be locked afterward. |
| <i>Tree Climbing</i> | An adult must be present when children climb trees in the Nature School. The ground cover should be checked for 'sharp objects and the tree marked as suitable for climbing. A visual check must be made for loose and rotten branches. Children are permitted to explore to their own limits or to a maximum height of 1.5m. Adults should be near enough to catch if a child should fall but far enough away to not be invasive to the children's exploration. |
| <i>Leaving the Site</i> | We work according to the ethos 'leave no trace' that we were in the woods as much as is reasonably possible. Shelters should be taken down, and imported materials need to be removed. All equipment is carefully counted out and back in again, especially when using tools and tent pegs. Very occasionally large items may be left between sessions. All rubbish will always be removed. If artifacts have been found or made these may be taken off the site with the consent of an adult. |
| <i>Carrying and Transporting Materials</i> | Children are encouraged to roll, lift, drag, and pull materials, either by using their hands or by using ropes. We encourage safe lifting by bending our knees and keeping our backs straight. Safe lifting should always be modelled by adults. Heavier objects should be rolled, lifted, or carried by more people working together. (Safe lifting risk assessment) |
| <i>Toileting</i> | Children are invited to use the toilets before we leave the "base". Children will be allowed to return to the "base" with an accompanying adult. Also, if we are far away from the "base" or nearest porta potty children will be encouraged to use the bush, and the educator will help the child if needed. |
| <i>Rope and String Use</i> | We encourage the collection and transportation of materials. We do not allow children to tie up with each other. If a child has a good idea and wants to tie up something, for example, a tarp or a swing, an adult should help them as needed, modelling appropriate knot tying and modelling how to talk through ideas and decisions. |
| <i>Eating and Drinking</i> | Nil by mouth policy (No lick, no pick) for anything found in the area, unless this activity has been specifically planned for during the session. Children must be reminded not to put their fingers or hands in their mouths or noses. When having drinks and snacks children will use wipes & water to clean their hands before consumption. |
| <i>Collecting Wood</i> | Wood is collected for fire lighting purposes. It is collected in four thicknesses – matchstick-sized, pencil-sized, thumb-sized, and wrist-sized. This is a good mathematical activity involving sorting and matching. Sticks may be collected for creating pictures and patterns but should be collected sparingly so as not to disrupt creature habitats. |
| <i>Picking up and Playing with Stones</i> | Stones may be picked up and transported. Children often like to make patterns and pictures with them. Stones may not be thrown. They may be dropped but thought must be given to whether it is safe to do so, i.e., what is beneath where I am dropping it? |

Philosophy

At Fern Flower - Nature School we primarily practice Forest/Nature School Philosophy. For us the main focus is Nature. We are mentors and facilitators, helping young children grow and connect in our all-outdoor classroom. In our Fern Flower - Nature School sessions, we nurture the seeds of connection to self, others, nature, and those who have come before us. In addition to teaching respect for the Earth and we teach respect for all living beings.

Learning for children is grounded and expressed through play. As Jean Piaget once said, "Play is the work of children." A play-based pedagogy recognizes the holistic nature of play and Nature Schools around the development of the whole child; it treats a child's emotional, physical, and social selves as interwoven and encourages depth of experience.

Also, Nature School integrates lots of principles from the Reggio Emilia Approach which became a beautiful addition to our Philosophy. Reggio Emilia's Approach puts the *natural* development of people and the close relationships that they share with their environment at the Nature School into its philosophy. The Reggio Emilia approach and curriculum are just one of the many systems we have researched to create the Education for Life Program and this page is meant to function as an ever-expanding archive of open-source, free shared, and duplicable Reggio Emilia theory and application-inspired ideas.

Waldorf schools also place a great emphasis on rituals and natural cycles, and as such can sometimes seem to be a world unto themselves, however, the students tend to greatly appreciate these aspects of the curriculum with schools putting on highly impressive and inclusive school productions in drama and music. Waldorf is particularly good for those students who have a passion for nature and the arts, and for fostering empathy and self-awareness.

People's Roles in Fern Flower - Nature School

The Role(s) of the Educator:

The very skilled educator knows when to offer an insight, a question, or materials to support a child's learning, but more importantly, knows when to get out of the way.

— Jon Cree, UK Forest School Association

Fern Flower - Nature School educators are people who love natural places, and they share this love with children by bringing them to those places to play and learn. The outdoors is their classroom, and they choose and tend to it carefully. The Forest School Educator's role is that of a facilitator, one who moves from active sparking of the children's interests into quiet observation and planning.

- *Sparkling Engagement:* By modelling enthusiasm for nature play, the educator encourages children who might be nervous or new to outdoor play. Forest and Nature School educators act as a creative spark for the group, encouraging the growth of new ideas by making available to the children's materials, resources, and experiences that expand their creative, imaginative, and exploratory play. An educator might bring a personal story that sends the children off into stories of their own or ask a question that encourages the children to look more deeply into something that they have found.
- *Observing:* Once the children are engaged in the exploration, the educator steps back to give the children space to play and explore. This is an opportunity to become an observer, watching the children's interactions with each other and the site, collecting and documenting these experiences, and using this knowledge to enhance future outdoor learning.
- *Learning Alongside Children:* The educator gets dirty, explores, creates, builds, learns, gains knowledge, and celebrates alongside the children they work with.
- *Staying Safe:* During Nature School, the educator's role is to make sure the group is physically safe and comfortable. The children need to dress well for the weather and stay warm and dry throughout the day. The educator also assesses the overall safety of the site and the risk management required for specific activities, which can change from day to day, in collaboration with the children they work with.
- *Creating Connections:* The educator works to create a community with the children, the parents, the place, and the community at large and works with the children to help them through conflicts and discussions that arise. Before and during the group's visit to a site, the educator works with staff and students to assess the risk, ecological sensitivity, and play value of the site. Forest and Nature School educators choose rich natural places where the children can engage with loose parts and with natural features that engage the imagination and promote the children's physical and social development. They also act as stewards of the place, conscious of the group's interactions with it and their impact on it over time.

A Fern Flower - Nature School educator wears many hats. They slip seamlessly from playmate to researcher, at times actively participating in their students' exploration, while at other times maintaining a distance to listen and observe, and at other times stepping in as site and risk managers. They believe in the importance — and the joy! — of not simply permitting but encouraging children to get dirty and wet to experience a sense of connection to place, and to fall down to experience a sense of accomplishment when they get back up, or trust in a peer when they are helped back up.

The educator both leads (invites, nudges, pulls) students beyond their comfort zones and misconceptions into deeper thinking and understanding and follows their interests. Additionally, they spend much time reflecting on the day's events for future session planning, which itself is more an act of imagining the possible provocations, questions, and situations they might set up to build on prior experiences.

Indeed, reflecting on and articulating "what really happened" during the periods of outdoor free play and exploration that characterize Forest and Nature School is one of the most important

roles a Forest and Nature School educator plays. In this way, they act as a translator, reading the day's events with an eye that has been rigorously trained to uncover or decode the meaning made by and the growth facilitated in students while they were building forts, splashing in a creek, or scrambling up and sliding down slippery hills — and then communicating that value to parents, colleagues, and the broader community.

The Forest School Educator is a defender of play, and a protector of fantasy, wonder, and awe. They are the caring adults modelling respect and appreciation for the surrounding beauty, and under whose wing children come to feel safe in and connected to the natural world. It is this connection that will give purpose and meaning, moving a child through play, towards stewardship, and back to play once more.

The Role(s) of the Child:

The child's day begins with those first sensual experiences of the natural world. This 'classroom' is an infinite reservoir from which experience upon experience can be pulled, and children intuitively know this and immerse themselves in it. The sounds of the birds and other forest creatures, the crunch of snow or branches underfoot, and the whistle of the wind in the trees; the first view of the meeting place, the sight of a bird in flight, the blue or overcast sky overhead; the feeling of cold air, the sun's warm rays, or the touch of pine boughs on the skin; the smell of the trees, the earth, and sometimes a fire; sometimes they can even taste those smells as the wind brings them to the group. These sensual experiences create anticipation of the day ahead.

Fern Flower - Nature School sessions begin with a group meeting that bonds the children together and gives voice to their first impressions and any ideas that might lead to unforeseen adventures. While experienced educators will always have a rough outline for the day in mind built on previous sessions, they also know the children provide the impetus that will drive the day and express the collective needs of the group. So, with plans made and ideas expressed, the first expeditions can begin. Each day is different; tasks and initiatives can span several days, weeks, or months depending on where children will lead themselves and/or the group at large.

The children bring their own personalities, their own experiences, and their own stories to the group, and oh, what stories are told! Marvellous tales and grand fantasies play out in the minds of the children and are enacted through their experiences in the forest. Sometimes the play is pure imagination, while other times it is deeply rooted in the realities before them— imagined rescue missions for a comrade lost in the wilderness or the salvation of forest creatures, unseen but empathically acknowledged.

The children, through their deep immersion in the experiences of the forest, don't realize the profound connections they are making with the natural world or the social and physical skills they are constantly developing. But we, the educators, know — and that is why we do the work. Through their play, we fulfill our vocations and, in turn, assist the children in viewing nature as an extension of themselves, as a critical part of their lives and world.

Learning and Developmental Curriculum

Learning Approaches and Implementation

Learning Approaches

The true meaning of education can be derived from the Latin word 'Educare' which means 'to draw out'. In Nature School, an educator utilizes learning approaches that do just that, drawing out ideas and theories that start with and come from the whole child. In this way, Nature School is said to involve a curriculum which 'pulls' out, rather than a curriculum which 'pushes' in.

Inquiry-Based, Emergent and Experiential Learning. What does this mean?

Forest and Nature School start with the child in the context of the natural environment, but where do we go from there? One of the first questions asked of the Forest School Educator is, "But, what do you DO when you get outdoors?" Although we cannot prescribe activities for an educator to adapt, we can describe a process that is rooted in learning approaches that add depth, meaning and purpose to Nature School.

Children are born with an innate desire to explore and experience everything that surrounds them, to ask questions about these experiences, and to learn by doing. When these processes are supported, through further investigation and inquiry by a significant adult in their life, the results can be far-reaching. Most importantly, Nature School models to children and youth that learning can be fun can feel like an adventure and can lead to a lifelong passion for learning.

Inquiry-based Learning is a dynamic and emergent process that builds on students' natural curiosity about the world in which they live. As its name suggests, Inquiry places students' questions and ideas, rather than solely those of the teacher, at the Nature School of the learning experience. Students' questions drive the learning process forward. Teachers further facilitate students' learning by providing a variety of tools, resources, and experiences that enable learners to investigate, reflect, and rigorously discuss potential solutions to their own questions about a topic the class is studying.

In Fern Flower - Nature School we build upon children's experiences, as well as their "emerging" ideas, questions, and interests, scaffolding towards greater learning. Inquiry, at it, is the

most fundamental form, fuels this process and helps educators and children to dive deeper into knowing, learning and being.

Highlights of inquiry-based, emergent and experiential curriculum include:

- It's based on the individual interests of the children involved in the program.
- It allows for personal research by the children in areas of interest.
- It lets students work on their own interests at their own pace, addressing problems with multiple learning needs in the classroom environment.
- It incorporates the whole child, in the context of their family, community, and cultural background, as they carry these with them throughout their experiences.
- It explores problems that offer a variety of responses (its process based).
- It supports children to expand on their experiences, knowledge and wisdom in a nonthreatening and empowering manner; and
- It uses self-directed learning to promote academic engagement and motivate participation.

Lastly, through this lens, children are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and inspired to participate in activities that interest them. Children become engaged as "partners in the learning process" and are involved in small group activities that promote social interaction and problem-solving. However, children are not always predictable in the direction they take in their learning, which makes the role of the educator both rewarding and challenging: educators who facilitate an emergent curriculum need to be flexible and creative.

What Does This Look Like in Practice?

1. Creating a culture of observing and listening, both of students and of the natural world, supporting students to do the same for one another and their environment. An educator cannot "draw out" what they cannot hear, see or understand in a child.
2. Being willing to acknowledge and keep in check assumptions, prejudices, and preconceived notions, to move beyond what one "thinks" they know towards deeper learning instead.
3. Establishing low-ratio groups that support relationship-building.
4. Creating and modelling community standards that include respect, care, non-judgement, safety and inclusion.
5. Allowing children to make mistakes.
6. Allowing children to learn by doing.
7. Learning alongside children.
8. Introducing a resource, idea, or inquiry only after a child prompt explicitly or implicitly.
9. Giving children more time to explore, experience, solve problems, resolve conflicts, and provide answers to questions.

Whole Child Approach

Fern Flower - Nature School encompasses a holistic approach to learning. The three domains of the whole child development include:

- Physical
- Social-Emotional
- Cognitive

Please note that the domains are interrelated and influence one another.

- *Social/Emotional:* Including the child's emotional regulation, healthy attachment, self-image, ideal self, self-esteem, confidence, self-awareness, self-concept, managing strong emotions, self-efficacy, teamwork, community building, relationship with others (acceptance, love, kindness, ability to read others), social skills and competence, empathy, trust, perception, inclusion, empowerment, reflection, pushing comfort zones, connection to land, nature appreciation, sense of agency, and cultural appreciation.
- *Physical:* Including the child's fine and gross motor skill development, manipulation of objects, relationship with others, spatial awareness, organizing, interpreting, and responding to sensory information, skill acquisition, perception and decision making, physical literacy, visualization, and pushing comfort zones.
- *Cognitive:* Including the child's decision-making, higher-ordered thinking, critical thinking, and problem-solving, deep knowledge and understanding of the activity, intrinsic motivation, concentration, pushing comfort zones, emotional intelligence, eco-literacy, local knowledge and identification development, nature appreciation, empowerment, reflection, cultural appreciation, imagination, and planning.

Active Play

What is Active Play?

Active play refers to any physical activity or movement that involves children using their bodies and energy in a dynamic and engaging manner. It is characterized by actions that contribute to the development of physical fitness, motor skills, and overall well-being. Active play is typically unstructured and spontaneous, allowing children to explore their physical abilities, interact with their environment, and have fun.

Key features of active play include:

1. **Physical Movement:** Active play involves a range of physical movements such as running, jumping, climbing, crawling, skipping, and other activities that require bodily exertion.
2. **Engagement of Muscles:** Children use various muscle groups during active play, contributing to the development of strength, coordination, and motor skills.
3. **Spontaneity:** Unlike structured activities, active play is often spontaneous and driven by the child's interests and imagination. It allows for creativity and exploration.
4. **Social Interaction:** Active play can promote social interactions and cooperation among children. It provides opportunities for collaboration, communication, and the development of social skills.

5. **Outdoor Exploration:** While active play can occur indoors, it is often associated with outdoor activities that allow children to connect with nature, experience different terrains, and enjoy fresh air and sunshine.
6. **Promotion of Health:** Regular engagement in active play contributes to overall physical health and well-being. It helps prevent sedentary behavior and encourages a more active lifestyle.

Examples of active play include playing tag, riding bikes, playing on a playground, participating in sports, dancing, and engaging in imaginative games that involve physical movement. Active play is considered essential for the holistic development of children, supporting not only their physical health but also their cognitive, emotional, and social development. Encouraging active play in childhood sets the foundation for a healthy and active lifestyle later in life.

Why is Active Play Important?

Active play is crucial for the overall development and well-being of children. The importance of active play stems from its positive impact on various aspects of physical, mental, and social development. Here are key reasons why active play is considered essential:

1. **Physical Health:**
 - **Motor Skills Development:** Active play involves various physical movements that contribute to the development of gross motor skills (large muscle movements) and fine motor skills (small muscle movements).
 - **Strength and Endurance:** Running, jumping, climbing, and other active play activities help build strength and endurance, promoting a healthy cardiovascular system.
2. **Healthy Lifestyle Habits:**
 - **Establishing Active Habits:** Engaging in active play during childhood helps establish habits of physical activity, contributing to a healthier lifestyle throughout life.
 - **Preventing Sedentary Behavior:** Regular active play reduces the risk of sedentary behavior and associated health issues, such as obesity and related conditions.
3. **Cognitive Development:**
 - **Enhanced Brain Function:** Physical activity has been linked to improved cognitive function, including better concentration, attention, and problem-solving skills.
 - **Stimulating Creativity:** Active play fosters creativity and imagination as children explore their environment and engage in imaginative games.
4. **Social and Emotional Well-being:**
 - **Social Interaction:** Active play often involves group activities, promoting social interaction, teamwork, and cooperation.
 - **Emotional Regulation:** Physical activity helps release endorphins, which can contribute to improved mood and emotional well-being.

5. Stress Reduction:

- Natural Stress Relief: Active play provides a natural outlet for releasing energy and reducing stress. It can be particularly effective in managing anxiety and promoting mental health.

6. Nature Connection:

- Outdoor Exploration: Many active play activities occur outdoors, fostering a connection with nature. Outdoor play provides exposure to natural elements, fresh air, and sunlight.

7. Academic Readiness:

- Improved School Performance: Regular physical activity has been associated with improved academic performance, as it enhances cognitive function and concentration.

8. Life Skills Development:

- Problem-Solving and Decision-Making: Active play often involves decision-making and problem-solving, contributing to the development of critical life skills.
- Self-Regulation: Through active play, children learn to regulate their behavior, manage impulses, and navigate social interactions.

9. Family and Community Bonding:

- Quality Family Time: Active play provides opportunities for families to engage in recreational activities together, fostering bonding and communication.
- Community Engagement: Participation in group activities and sports promotes a sense of community and belonging.

Encouraging and facilitating active play in various forms is essential for providing children with a holistic foundation for their physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. Schools, caregivers, and communities play vital roles in creating environments that support and prioritize active play for children.

Nature School Active Play and Movement Policy?

At our Nature School, we prioritize the well-being and holistic development of our children, recognizing the intrinsic value of active play and physical movement in fostering a connection with nature. Our Active Play and Movement Policy aligns with the Standard of Practice, emphasizing the following principles:

1. Daily Active Play Goal:

- We commit to incorporating a total of 120 minutes of active play and physical movement each day, recognizing the vital role it plays in the overall development of our children.

2. Outdoor Play Emphasis:

- We ensure a minimum of 60 minutes of outdoor active play daily, fostering a strong connection with the natural environment. In instances of poor weather or limited outdoor space, we offer the flexibility for indoor active play while preserving the essence of nature in our activities.

3. Active Play Plan Development:

- Our Licensee is dedicated to developing and implementing a comprehensive Active Play Policy. This policy encompasses both un-facilitated play and facilitated games, encouraging children to explore and engage with nature in a variety of ways.

4. Integration of Fundamental Movement Skills:

- Fundamental movement skills and injury prevention, guided by the principles of physical literacy, are seamlessly integrated into all our active play activities. This approach ensures a well-rounded and enriching experience for the children.

5. Mindful Screen Time Management:

- We limit screen time to 30 minutes or less per day, emphasizing the importance of real-world experiences over digital engagement. Exceptions are made for shorter programs, and no screen time is provided for children under the age of two.

6. Screen Use Policy Implementation:

- In tandem with our commitment to mindful screen time management, we have developed a Screen Use Policy. This policy guides our educators in creating a balanced and intentional approach to screen activities and is shared with our parents and families.

7. Active Lifestyle Promotion:

- Prolonged sitting activities, such as those in strollers or highchairs, are discouraged. Instead, we schedule frequent short bursts of activity, lasting one to two minutes, to promote an active and dynamic lifestyle among our children.

8. Employee Role Modeling:

- Our dedicated employees are integral in creating an environment that promotes active play and movement. They model appropriate behavior by actively engaging in play activities and demonstrating responsible screen time usage.

Our Nature School's Active Play and Movement Policy underscores our commitment to providing a healthy, enriching, and nature-connected environment for the children in our care. Through these practices, we aim to cultivate a lifelong appreciation for active living and a harmonious relationship with the natural world.

For more information, please refer to *Director of Licensing Standard of Practice - Active Play*

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/FMfcgzGwJcmXNdHgVLHBxLDtpWTxIBKI?projector=1&messagePartId=0.>

Different Learning Techniques and Strategies

Play-Based Learning

What Does This Mean?

Learning for children is grounded and expressed through play. As Jean Piaget once said, “Play is the work of children.” A play-based pedagogy recognizes the holistic nature of play and Nature Schools around the development of the whole child; it treats a child’s emotional, physical, and social selves as interwoven and encourages depth of experience.

A child or youth at play in the outdoors is busy building social skills, learning to be reflective, and understanding the limits of his/her actions and body. Children engaged in nature play are encouraged to solve problems through creative solutions and make decisions while learning to trust their intuition. Nature-based play, rich in stimuli, allows children to rely on their senses to make sense of the world around them.

Children communicate through play, build relationships through play, articulate needs through play, and most importantly have fun through play. Learning that emerges through play is meaningful because of the authenticity of those playing—the play occurs on their terms, guided but not dictated by an educator.

A common definition of play in Forest and Nature School can be defined as a process that is freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas, and interests in their own way for their own reasons.

Play is explicitly recognized in Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, on November 29, 1989), which declares:

- Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
- Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities.

What Does This Look Like in Practice?

Researchers have identified various types of play, and each can be demonstrated by children in Nature Schools groups. Here are some of the types of play are discussed below:

- Symbolic play involves children using symbols, objects, designs, or signs to represent people, ideas or qualities. In Forest and Nature School groups, children can use sticks and rocks to represent everything from fire hoses, to swords, money, or food. They can also use them to represent “little people,” like younger brothers and sisters or otherworld people.

- Exploratory play is a play that accesses factual information about an environment and engages with the area or thing and, either by manipulation or movement, assesses its properties, possibilities and content. This is an obvious one for Forest and Nature School — kids explore constantly (under rocks, in decomposing logs, in branches, in tall grass, in the ground, etc.).
- Socio-dramatic play is an opportunity for children to enact real and potential experiences. Groups of children in Forest and Nature School often enact personal real-life situations, like bedtime or family holidays, in which they rotate roles of parent and child and deal with difficult siblings.
- Dramatic play, in contrast, is an opportunity for children to act out events that are not part of everyday life. These include scenes from others' lives or from the television or theatre ... or being famous footballers or a band. Children in younger FNS groups like to act out animal rescue scenarios, in which they find a lost squirrel or rabbit and care for it. Older students often create elaborate stories that they continue to enact from session to session.
- Social play includes any social or interactive situation which contains an expectation on all parties that they will discuss and abide by certain rules, customs or protocols. Unless a child chooses to play independently, almost all play in Forest and Nature School is social play. Children agree on the activity, where it will be played, how it will be played, what will happen, and how to deal with challenges. For instance, a group might develop an elaborate “bakery” in the woods and build it each time in the same place. Each child in the group would then take on different established roles in the “bakery” — like baker, cleaner, front counter — and, together, have great and heated discussions about who is supposed to do what, when, how, and what rules should exist for changing jobs to make it fair for everyone. With so many children involved in one play scenario, it might seem likely to end in disagreement; yet, in our experience, the children all follow the rules they created together, and they can play quite happily this way for an entire session.
- Communication play involves using words, nuances or gestures, for example, mime, jokes, play acting ... singing, debate, and poetry. This is common in older groups, and students who are more reserved are more likely to participate in this type of play at Forest and Nature School.
- Creative play (inventive play) is about focused but spontaneous creation with a wide range of materials and tools —and Forest and Nature School can be very creative. Young children often make beautiful 2- and 3-dimensional designs using pinecones, sticks, bark, and stones that they find on the forest floor. Often, the children then use these to decorate a house or structure they have built in the forest. Children also regularly use natural materials to make music.
- Deep play is a play in which children conquer fears by working through what they perceive to be high-risk physical or emotional experiences. In FNS, deep play fear-conquering most often occurs in connection to climbing — climbing trees or climbing over tangles of logs and branches.

- A fantasy play is a completely unreal play. Forest and Nature School groups sometimes create stories and role-playing games involving superheroes or magic, and kids imagine they have special powers like flying.
- Imaginative play is a play in which the conventional rules that govern the physical world do not apply, but is based on reality. There is an enormous amount of imaginative play at Forest and Nature School. Many of the children start their sentences with the word “pretend.” Children imagine the forest and its elements to be anything that fits the story or game they want to weave. Not only do people and objects take on imaginary roles, but these are constantly in flux — the children regularly discuss and agree upon changes to the scenario. For example, a fort structure might have started out as a ship and the children and its crew — a ship that later morphs into the island the ship landed on, while the crew becomes those people who live on the island. Through the imaginations of children in a group, you’ll find the ground you are standing on changes frequently: what starts out as water will quickly change into lava, and you’ll need to join the group on an imagined island for safety.
- Locomotor play is active play. This is another obvious one for Forest and Nature School. Kids play hide and seek, climb trees/logs/rocks, hang from grapevines, walk around gathering materials, make and use pretend (and sometimes real) ziplines, roll down hills on the way to the site, and balance on fallen logs. Forest and Nature School play is active.
- Mastery play involves taking (and feeling) control of the physical and affective ingredients of the natural environment, for example digging holes and tunnels in earth or sand; changing the course of streams; gaining a new skill, for example, a jump across a river. Certainly, young people in FNS groups dig holes, build using natural materials, make channels to drain or connect puddles, and gain new skills in terms of climbing, balancing, and navigating steep hills.
- The recapitulative play displays aspects of human evolutionary history. While, at many Forest and Nature Schools, fires aren’t allowed on site, children will regularly build fires, pretend to light them, and create shelter villages around them. Even though some children are sadly prevented from actually lighting fires, they pretend to build fires with surprising regularity. They build shelters, in one form or another, in almost every session.
- Rough and Tumble play involves testing physical limits, play-fighting, and chasing. Within certain student-generated safety guidelines, rough-and-tumble play also has a place at Forest and Nature School.

Place-Based Learning

What Does This Mean?

Childhood connection begins in specific places but extends beyond those places: as the poet Rilke wrote, “I live my life in widening circles, that reach out across the world” (Rilke et al., 1996). Once you fall in love with one place, your heart can open to the world.

Place-based learning is firmly rooted in the act of connecting children to a particular place through direct experiential contact. The ability to know a place intimately and to return to a natural space, again and again, provides children with familiarity while honing their ability to

recognize and understand processes of change. With a connection to place comes a desire and sense of responsibility for caretaking and protection. Frequent encounters lead to an increased sense of belonging and, ultimately, to a sense of stewardship for that place, for the broader community, and beyond.

Place-based educators call this the “pedagogy of community” because of the reintegration of the individual into her home ground and the restoration of the essential links between a person and her place. Not all children are lucky enough to have a city park or naturalized area behind their school, but the places for deep nature connection do not need to be vast or grand: the ditches, ravines, and pockets of wildness even in urban landscapes are places of initiation, where the borders between ourselves and other creatures break down, where the earth gets under our nails and a sense of place gets under our skin ... [These places] teach us to care enough for all the land. Forest and Nature Schools are a means by which young people can forge this sense of place.

Storytelling

We live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way, or we are also living the stories we planted-knowingly or unknowingly- in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives.

— Ben Okri, *A Way of Being Free* (1997, p. 46)

With a holistic and child-directed approach to learning, the Forest and Nature School environment provides many opportunities for sharing stories. As discussed above, folktales, fairy tales, riddles, rhymes, myths, fables, legends, and personal stories can all be part of storytelling in FNS. The tradition of oral storytelling can be a way to teach, engage, and provoke thinking. It can also be a jumping-off point for inquiry, a stimulation of the senses, a tuning into place, and even an elicitation of the imagination.

Children and adults alike love to hear and tell stories. Oral stories in particular are a valuable form of education, entertainment, and sharing. Storytelling can be a powerful way to express emotions, describe experiences, enhance imagination, and develop listening skills. Storytelling can be at its most powerful when it happens “face to face, eye to eye, gesture to gesture, voice to ear, heart to heart and mind to mind in one location by one person to one or more” (Finnegan, 1992).

We learn sequencing, rhythm, and vocabulary as we listen to stories. By following the plot of a story, children learn how to understand sequences of events and their connection to each other. Stories also provide a platform for children to learn the meaning of new words: they learn what one word means by comparing it to other words around it. This happens subconsciously and constantly while children listen to stories.

The act of verbalizing memories is also important for developing children’s language and memory skills. Reconstructing a story about what they have experienced gives children language practice. It also gives children the opportunity to go back in their minds and stretch their cognitive

abilities as they think and talk about past events. Telling stories boosts memories. It also boosts self-esteem: recalling experiences helps children identify with their personal history and heightens their sense of self. In this way, sharing tales about the day, family history, and folklore is important for children's cognitive and emotional development.

Stories can also be a safe place for children to explore life. Through stories, they can take risks and face fears that might be too powerful for them to face in real life. In this way, storytelling is empowering and therapeutic. Many traditional and literary tales provide children with the opportunity to reflect on and validate feelings of sadness, joy, anger, empathy, jealousy, and many other feelings children experience on a day outdoors.

Storytelling helps children put themselves in other people's shoes. They learn to empathize with the teller, the hero, and the situation. Their bodies react to the story by tensing and relaxing at every twist of the plot. In this way, as children are experiencing the story, they are practicing empathy.

Stories can transport children to other times and places while expressing universal truths relevant to their own lives. They allow children to safely experience the adventures of others while teaching them values and history and helping them to discover themselves. In Forest and Nature School, connections to storytelling emerge in children's play and interactions with one another.

How we bring Storytelling into our Fern Flower - Nature School:

- learning folktales and fairy tales.
- telling personal, original, family, and traditional stories.
- making a regular time and place for storytelling.
- involving or getting involved with your local storytelling guild.
- using a musical instrument or noisemaker to introduce each story or start storytelling time.

Loose Parts

"The Wider the Range of Possibilities We Offer Children, The More Intense Will Be Their Motivations and The Richer Their Experiences."

- Loris Malaguzzi, Founder of the Reggio Emilia Approach

At Fern Flower - Nature School we are also inspired by Reggio Emilia Approach. Loose parts are materials that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, taken apart and put back together in multiple ways. The idea of 'loose parts' uses materials to empower a creative imagination. The more materials and individuals involved; the more ingenuity takes place. We encourage our children to make use of all loose parts indoors and outdoors. They are incorporated into much of the children's project work.

At Forest and Nature School, loose parts are inherent. Nature, which excites all the senses, remains the richest source of loose parts. Sticks, rocks, pine needles and pinecones, low branches, stumps, logs, and grasses all are loose parts that may be found in a Forest and Nature School environment. FNS is a setting in which different people and groups can interact in myriad ways.

How we bring loose parts play into our Nature School:

- Natural materials sourced sustainably on your site, such as sticks, rocks, pine needles, flowers, acorns, stumps, branches, logs, fallen bark, etc. (Note: bringing in non-native or foreign objects from other sites can be disruptive to local habitats).
- Tools for building, making and creating (used in a timely, safe and purposeful manner, with appropriate training to support its use, and only when elicited by a child's interest).
- Handmade wooden mallets, stakes, and tree cookies (can be made by educators and/or adults).
- Buckets, trowels, pulleys, rope, natural fibers, and tarps of varying sizes.
- Identification books and tools for plants, animals, birds, etc.
- Clay, charcoal, wax crayons, pencil, paper, and twine (for documentation, reflection, and/or making learning journals).

Wildschooling

Wildschooling is a movement designed to honor and support our innate, inexorable bond with nature and lend a voice to our inner wild. Wildschooling recognizes nature's connection as a fundamental human need, right and state of being, and values. It respects the whole child, is relationship-led, favors place-bonded, contextual & emergent learning and aligns with nature's rhythms. It also encourages village building, respects and honors ancestral knowledge, preserves and honors stories and supports a future paradigm.

At KFNS, we believe that now more than ever, children and nature need each other. Children must be given the time, space and opportunity to bond with nature. The simplest, most meaningful and effective place to do that is in their nearby nature! By connecting to their local habitat, biome, backyard nature and community, children are participating in a timeless human tradition, and connecting to generations before and generations after.

Tools in Nature School

What tools will be used in Nature School?

In Nature School, the children use the same tools that they use in school as part of the Design Technology curriculum. These include potato peelers, palm drills and when they are competent, small knives and bow saws. The Nature School Leader will be the supervising adult when tools are being used and the ratio will be no more than 1:8. The Nature School Leader will give the children a safety talk each session and when appropriate will explain how a tool should be used and when it can be used safely. If a child is not safely using a tool the activity is stopped and safety instructions will again be given.

Gloves are kept on-site and can be worn if the child wants to or if the Forest School Leader feels that the child needs to. Gloves can protect the hand if worn on the bracing (supporting) hand but when working the child needs to feel the object and have a good grip at all times. All activities using tools are fully risk-assessed.

Tool Policy:

The variety of tools like saws, loppers, knives, etc. can all be used with any of the age groups at Fern Flower - Nature School. The decision of, if and when to do so will reside with the NS Leader at the point that he feels that the group can be trusted to use the tools safely. The decision to use the tools can only be revoked by the NS Leader.

- All tools are to be kept in a locked cupboard within the school building after use.
- The NS Leader or assisting staff (when designated by the NS Leader) is responsible for demonstrating the correct use of each tool, including transportation.
- When any tool is in use, it will be within a designated area and under the supervision of the NS Leader or assisting staff under the ratio annotated in the tool's procedures.
- Gloves are not to be worn on the hand(s) controlling the tool.

How does the Curriculum look at Fern Flower - Nature School

Curriculum:

The curriculum at Fern Flower - Nature School includes child-initiated and teacher-directed activities and experiences offered to young children that support and enrich their development physically, emotionally, socially, and cognitively. Fern Flower - Nature School uses a specially designed emergent curriculum which is curated for each child and for the group in general. Each session has weekly lesson plans, posted in the classroom. These plans contain several activities, designed to foster each child's development, and the development of the group as a whole. Lesson plans should be changed to accommodate the children's changing interests. Each classroom is set up in Nature Schools, which include blocks, dramatic play, books, gross motor, fine motor, sensory, science or discovery center, playdough/clay area and art. Self-selection or "free-play" is a daily part of the curriculum and means a child has the opportunity to choose which Nature School or activity he/she participates in. This promotes creative expression and the development of important social skills.

Daily Activities:

The Lead Teacher, Assistants and Volunteers work cooperatively to create a daily schedule and plan activities that meet each child's developmental abilities and needs. Every staff member is responsible for carrying out the schedule and activities. The daily schedule and activities create a balance between active and relaxing times; large and small group, and individual activities; small and large muscle activities; indoor and outdoor play times; as well as times for self-selection and teacher-directed activities. Consistency from day to day is particularly important to the overall well-being of the children and the classroom environment. Children thrive on consistency! Routines will be maintained whenever possible for arrivals and departures; meals and snacks; resting; fire circle gatherings; personal care routines like toileting and hand washing; and transitions. Lesson plans and the daily schedule will be posted in the classroom and visible at all times.

Project Studies:

The use of project studies is a practical and logical way to begin curriculum planning. The studies will be based on what the children know and see every day, as well as the children's interests. The studies are age-appropriate and may span the length of one week, or one month depending on the interest level.

Teachers will encourage them to discuss with each other their studies and coordinate the sharing of materials and activities.

Physical Environment:

The actual room arrangement of each program room is the responsibility of the Program Lead Teacher and Full-Time Assistant Teacher. Space should be organized according to the Environment Rating Scales (ERS). Nature Schools should include blocks, dramatic play, art, large and small motor, and books. These areas should be clearly defined, with obvious boundaries. Quiet areas should be set up as far away from noisy activities (blocks, cars, etc.) as possible. The room décor should consist mostly of child artwork and photographs of animals, people, food, and the children themselves at the child's eye level. Room arrangement should take into consideration that staff must be able to see every child at all times.

For a more detailed description of room arrangement and the physical environment, staff members may refer to a copy of the appropriate ERS manual, available in the office. The Director and/or Manager must approve changes to the physical environment, including the room arrangement.

Free Play:

"Free play" (also called child-initiated activities, free choice, self-selection) must be incorporated into the morning and afternoon schedule. Teachers are expected to actively participate with the children during free play activities by asking questions about what the children are doing, participating in their pretend play, reading books when prompted, encouraging children to try new activities or play with a new toy, etc.

Multimedia:

The use of multimedia in our program is an extension of the teaching and learning that takes place in our classrooms. Teachers may select movie, television, and computer game titles based on weekly studies. Instead, the activity is offered as one of several Nature Schools. Children are limited to a maximum of 1 hour per week they may use or view multimedia (it will be occasional experiences).

Process, not Product

We strongly believe that there is no final destination or end result we are trying to achieve – that learning happens through work and play. Our process is unhurried.

Screen Time Policy

At our Nature School, we are dedicated to fostering a holistic and nature-centric learning environment for children. Our Screen Time Policy is designed to guide educators, parents, and families in promoting balanced and mindful screen time practices that align with our commitment to nature-based education.

1. Purpose:

- a. Screen time in our Nature School serves as a supplementary tool to enhance educational experiences and is purposefully integrated into the curriculum.
- b. The goal is to ensure that screen time complements our nature-focused approach and does not replace essential outdoor and hands-on activities.

2. Definition of Screen Time:

- a. Screen time includes the use of electronic devices such as televisions, computers, tablets, smartphones, and other digital media.
- b. Both educational and recreational screen activities fall under this definition.

3. Duration Guidelines:

- a. Screen time is limited to a maximum of 30 minutes per day for all age groups, in accordance with British Columbia's recommended guidelines.
- b. Exceptions may be considered for shorter programs, while children under the age of two will not have any screen time.

4. Content Selection:

- a. Screen content is carefully selected to align with the educational objectives of our Nature School, emphasizing nature-based, educational, and age-appropriate material.
- b. Prioritization is given to content that complements our commitment to environmental education and sustainability.

5. Screen Use Policy Implementation:

- a. Educators will adhere to the guidelines outlined in our Screen Use Policy during all screen time activities.
- b. The Screen Use Policy will be communicated with parents and families to ensure consistency between the school and home environments.

6. Alternatives to Screen Time:

- a. Nature-based and hands-on activities take precedence over screen time to encourage physical, social, and imaginative play.
- b. Educators will provide a variety of engaging, non-digital activities that align with the principles of our Nature School.

7. Parental Involvement:

- a. Parents are encouraged to be mindful of their child's overall screen time, considering both school and home activities.
- b. Regular communication between educators and parents is promoted to maintain a cohesive and supportive approach to screen time management.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation:

- a. The effectiveness of our Screen Time Policy will be regularly reviewed to assess its impact on children's well-being and development.
- b. Feedback from educators, parents, and ongoing research will inform any necessary adjustments to the policy.

9. Exceptional Circumstances:

- a. In exceptional circumstances where screen time may be extended or modified, such decisions will be made collaboratively between educators and parents, considering the child's individual needs.

Our Screen Time Policy reflects our dedication to providing a nature-infused, balanced educational experience for children at our Nature School. By embracing this policy, we aim to instill healthy screen time habits, foster creativity, and nurture a lifelong connection with the natural world.

Our Day at Fern Flower - Nature School

Nature School Operation Hours

As you know already FFNS is open 5 days a week:

| | <i>Open</i> | <i>Closed</i> |
|----------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| <i>Monday</i> | 8:00 am | 12:15 pm |
| <i>Tuesday</i> | 8:00 am | 5:00 pm |
| <i>Wednesday</i> | 8:00 am | 5:00 pm |
| <i>Thursday</i> | 8:00 am | 5:00 pm |
| <i>Friday</i> | 8:00 am | 12:15 pm |
| <i>Saturday and Sunday</i> | Closed | |

Fern Flower - Nature School is offering 2(two) programs for children 2.5 to 5 years of age.

| <i>Programs</i> | <i>Start</i> | <i>End</i> | <i>Days on which sessions take place</i> |
|--------------------------|--------------|------------|--|
| <i>Morning Session</i> | 8:00 a.m. | 12:15 p.m. | Monday to Friday |
| <i>Afternoon Session</i> | 12:45 p.m. | 5:00 p.m. | Tuesday to Thursday |

Our session duration is 4 hours and 15 minutes.

Schedule

Morning Session (8:00 am to 12:15 pm):

| Time | Actions |
|----------------------------|---|
| 8:00 am To 8:30 am | The morning Session begins at 8:00 am. Drop off time. Saying goodbye to parents or guardians, putting their belongings away, washing hands and Free Play – Children will choose their games and activities. There will be a variety of centers, games, and activities available to the children geared toward enhancing their growth and development |
| 8:30 am To 9:00 am | Continuation of free play and Centers. |
| 9:00 am To 9:15 am | First Fire Gathering – Children will be able to share any news or special experiences |
| 9:15 am | Bathroom |
| 9:15 am To 9:45 am | Snack |
| 9:45 am To 11:10 am | Time to explore – children will guide and choose what they would like to do |
| 11:10 am | Bathroom |
| 11:10 am To 11:30 am | Second Fire Gathering – Children will be able to share any news or special experiences about their day and what they learned |
| 11:30 am To 11:45 am | Clean-Up Time – Put away not needed activities and downsize the set-up |
| 11:45 am To 12:15 pm | Free Play until the pick-up. The morning Session ends at 12:15 pm sharp. |

Afternoon Session (12:45 pm – 5:00pm):

| Time | Actions |
|---------------------------|--|
| 12:45 pm To 1:15 pm | The afternoon Session begins at 12:45 pm. Drop off time. Saying goodbye to parents or guardians, putting their belongings away, washing hands and Free Play – Children will choose their games and activities. There will be a variety of toys, games, and activities available to the children geared toward enhancing their growth and development. |
| 1:15 pm To 1:30 pm | Continuation of free play and Centers. |
| 1:30 pm To 1:45 pm | First Fire Gathering - Children will be able to share any news or special experiences |
| 1:45 pm | Bathroom |
| 1:45 pm To 2:15 pm | Snack |
| 2:15 pm To 3:50 pm | Time to explore – children will guide and choose what they would like to do |
| 3:50 pm | Bathroom |
| 3:50 pm To 4:10 pm | Second Fire Gathering - Children will be able to share any news or special experiences about their day and what they learned |
| 4:10 pm To 4:30 pm | Clean-Up Time – Put away not needed activities and downsize the set-up |
| 4:30 pm To 5:00 pm | Free Play until the pick-up. The afternoon Session ends at 5:00 pm sharp. |

This is our day-to-day schedule.

Note: That schedule may change, and it is working as a suggestion more than a strict measure.

Policies and Protocols

Care and Supervision of Children

In the context of our Nature School, effective supervision stands as a fundamental pillar in ensuring the safety and well-being of the children under our care. Together with thoughtful design and arrangement of the natural learning environments, supervision plays a crucial role in preventing accidents and mitigating the severity of potential injuries. Children, in their natural inclination to challenge their abilities, may not always recognize associated risks. Therefore, our staff is committed to actively supervising children, and identifying and minimizing potential risks to ensure a safe and enjoyable play and learning experience. Through close observation, our caregivers can identify opportunities to support and enhance children's play experiences, recognizing moments when children seek independent play. The determination of the appropriate level of direct versus indirect supervision is a nuanced decision that caregivers, possessing a keen awareness of each child and their unique needs, are best suited to make. This includes recognizing the developmental stage of each child, with younger children requiring continuous close monitoring and older children benefiting from a balanced approach that respects their growing independence. Our commitment to effective supervision is rooted in the understanding that it not only ensures the safety of the children but also promotes a positive and enriching learning environment.

This policy outlines the guidelines and principles for the care and supervision of children at our Nature School. It is designed to ensure the safety, well-being, and positive development of each child while fostering a nurturing and natural learning environment.

Active and Positive Supervision

Care providers who are involved, aware and appreciative of children's behaviors are in the best position to safeguard their well-being. Here are some points to consider:

- Know each child's abilities.
- Establish clear and simple safety rules.
- Be aware of potential hazards.
- Position yourself strategically.
- Scan and circulate.
- Focus on the positive rather than the negative.
- Redirect.
- Always be Emergency Prepared.
- Do regular Health and Safety Checks.
- Check and follow weather and nature guidelines.
- Communicate with parents regularly.
- Keep documentation up to date.

Indicators of Active and Positive Supervision at Nature School:

1. Engaged Interaction:
 - Caregivers actively engage with children during outdoor activities, encouraging exploration, and facilitating meaningful interactions with the natural environment.
2. Proactive Risk Identification:
 - Staff members consistently scan the outdoor environment to identify potential risks and hazards, taking immediate actions to mitigate or eliminate them.
3. Age-Appropriate Supervision:
 - Caregivers tailor their supervision approach based on the age and developmental stage of each child, recognizing the need for continuous monitoring for younger children and allowing age-appropriate independence for older ones.
4. Responsive to Individual Needs:
 - Caregivers are attentive to the unique needs of each child, adapting their supervision style to accommodate diverse abilities, interests, and comfort levels.
5. Facilitation of Learning Opportunities:
 - Staff members actively observe and identify spontaneous learning opportunities during play, providing support and guidance to enhance the educational value of the natural experiences.
6. Effective Communication:
 - Open and clear communication is maintained among staff members, ensuring that everyone is aware of each child's location, activities, and any specific considerations or concerns.
7. Promotion of Independence:
 - Caregivers foster a sense of independence by allowing children to explore, make decisions, and engage in age-appropriate risk-taking within the boundaries of safety.
8. Inclusive Supervision:
 - Inclusive practices are employed, ensuring that every child, including those with diverse abilities, feels supported and included in all activities, adapting supervision methods as necessary.
9. Regular Safety Checks:
 - Systematic checks of the outdoor environment are conducted at regular intervals to ensure ongoing safety, including equipment inspections and assessment of changing weather conditions.
10. Positive Reinforcement:
 - Caregivers use positive reinforcement and encouragement to motivate and acknowledge safe and positive behavior, creating a supportive and affirming atmosphere.
11. Adaptability to Changing Conditions:
 - Staff members exhibit flexibility and adaptability in their supervision approach, recognizing that the dynamics of outdoor play and learning can change, requiring responsive adjustments.

12. Parental Engagement:

- Regular and transparent communication is maintained with parents, keeping them informed about their child's experiences, achievements, and any noteworthy observations during outdoor activities.

13. Crisis Preparedness:

- Caregivers are trained in emergency response and demonstrate preparedness to address unforeseen situations, ensuring the safety and well-being of the children in all circumstances.

These indicators collectively contribute to the establishment of a secure, enriching, and positive learning environment at our Nature School, promoting the overall well-being and development of the children under our care.

Registration

Parents/Guardians must fully complete the FFNS registration forms and family contract for services. All families will have received a copy of the Parent Handbook and must have completed the required forms and have arranged for payment before their child can attend the Fern Flower - Nature School. When a parent has made a confirmation to secure a spot and start date and then decides to withdraw their child from a secured spot the families will be responsible for a one-month withdrawal fee.

Registration includes the Registration fee of \$50.00 as a non-refundable deposit to secure your child's place on our waitlist or directly into the childcare program unless otherwise agreed in writing. If the registered child does not accept the first opportunity the child will either be removed from registration and/or placed at the bottom of the waitlist.

Payment Policy

As the Fern Flower -Nature School is a place of business, we must charge for our childcare services provided.

Childcare Service Rates Before Reduction:

Fern Flower - Nature School institutes a flat rate payment system on the following Morning or Afternoon Sessions enrollments:

Month Rate per Child:

- 5 days/week – 1,050.00 \$
- 4 days/week – 850.00 \$
- 3 days/week – 650.00 \$
- 2 days/week – 450.00 \$
- 1 day/week – 250.00 \$

Drop-In Rate per Child:

- 1 session – 75.00 \$

Note that Drop-In is not guaranteed that your child can get a spot that day. Please call-in advance before drop-in your child for the Dro-In Session also you need to Register in Advance.

Whether your child attends the Fern Flower - Nature School each day of operation or not, the full payment is expected, based on the original enrolment option.

All payments are due before the first day of each month and paid month forward.

Each parent is given a payment method option in their starting packages in which they choose their payment option and sign off on.

We accept only E-Transfers made to fernfloweratureschool@gmail.net.

All post-dated cheques can be made out to Fern Flower - Nature School, when received they are then locked up until a bank deposit can be made.

Invoice Notifications:

Parents will receive monthly invoices detailing the amount due and payment instructions a week before the 1st of the new month. Also, if there will be any other charges - it will be added to the invoice.

Affordable Child Care Benefit/Subsidy:

Parents apply online at <https://www.gov.bc.ca/affordablechildcarebenefit> and we will provide you with the additional form required from the childcare provider. The Parent Reduction Fee Benefit is not an initiative of FFNS. As well, The Affordable Child Care Benefit (subsidy), is an initiative of the Provincial Government and is not an initiative of the Fern Flower – Nature School. Subsidy bases their authorization on a family's income, and should you not meet their criteria they may minus a parent portion from the maximum subsidy or not approve you for any subsidy. The family is required to pay all fees the subsidy does not cover by the 1st of the month. Should subsidy be authorized after this time, you are eligible for a refund or credit on fees you have paid for any overpayments on your account. It is your responsibility to ensure the subsidy is renewed on time. In the event you have not renewed your childcare subsidy, you will be expected to pay the full monthly fee. Please contact the Fern Flower – Nature School with any questions regarding your invoice or amounts claimed under your subsidy authorization. The contact number is 250-299-2054 or fernfloweratureschool@gmail.com

Fee Structure:

Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative

As an organization we have been approved to participate in this program, parents do not need to apply to get this reduction. This is applied to all of our fees. Parents with a child in full-time care will see fees reduced by up to – 545.00 \$ (Full Time).

Reductions are applied by the age of the child and not by the program they are enrolled in.

| | 5 days a week | 4 days a week | 3 days a week | 2 days a week | 1 days a week | Drop-In – 1 session |
|---|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Morning or Afternoon Sessions (2.5 to 5 years of age) | 1,050.00 \$ / month | 850.00 \$ / month | 650.00 \$ / month | 450.00 \$ / month | 250.00 \$ / month | 75.00 \$ per session |
| BC Government Fee Reduction | -545.00 \$ | -436.00 \$ | -327.00 \$ | -218.00 \$ | -109.00 \$ | Not Qualified |
| Total (Fees after Government Fee Reduction) | 505.00 \$ / month | 414.00 \$ / month | 323.00 \$ / month | 232.00 \$ / month | 141.00 \$ / month | 75.00 \$ per session |

| | | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Approximate Price Per Session (After Government Fee Reduction) (4 h 15 min) | 25.25 \$ | 25.87 \$ | 26.91 \$ | 29.00 \$ | 35.25 \$ | 75.00 \$ |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|

Late Payment Fee:

A late payment fee of \$50.00 PER DAY will be charged for any payments or FFNS cheques made after the first day of the month.

After two (2) late fee charges Fern Flower - Nature School has the right to terminate care.

Subsidy Procedure:

Families receiving subsidies will get a printout of their government subsidy amount per month and a printout of childcare fees with an owing balance. Parents/Guardians are responsible for paying the owed Parent Portion of the monthly fees on or before the first of each month.

Refunds Policy:

- Refunds are not given unless there are extreme circumstances that prevent a child from participating in Nature School. Fern Flower - Nature School reserves the right to determine and assess these circumstances on a case-by-case basis.
- If a refund is issued, it will be subject to a \$50 administrative fee.
- Refunds will not be given if a day's program must be cancelled due to inclement weather.
- A full refund will be given if a program is cancelled due to insufficient registration.
- Any person who leaves during the middle of a program due to illness, injury, expulsion, or any other reason will not be refunded any portion of the program fees.

Sick Day Payments:

Fern Flower – Nature School understands that unforeseen circumstances, such as a child's illness, may require temporary absences from our facility. However, it is important to note that regular tuition fees remain applicable regardless of a child's attendance. This policy ensures the ongoing availability of qualified staff, maintenance of our facilities, and the provision of essential resources that contribute to a safe and enriching environment for all enrolled children, even during individual absences. We appreciate your understanding of this policy, which supports the continued quality of care and education provided at Fern Flower - Nature School. If your child is unwell, we encourage open communication with our staff to discuss any necessary accommodation or additional support.

Vacation Day or Absent Day Payments:

At Fern Flower – Nature School, during vacation periods or skipped days, families are required to continue making regular tuition payments to secure their child's spot in the Nature School.

There will be no discounts or reductions in tuition fees for periods when a family chooses to take time off or go on vacation. This policy ensures the stability of our programs and helps us maintain a consistent level of care and resources for all enrolled children.

Failure to make timely tuition payments during vacation periods may result in the suspension of enrollment.

Payment during Statutory Holidays:

At Fern Flower – Nature School, we are dedicated to providing quality care for your child. To ensure transparency and effective communication, we have established the following policy regarding statutory holidays:

- FFNS will be closed on all statutory holidays recognized in British Columbia, Canada, as per the statutory holiday schedule (see Nature School Closure Dates).
- Families are required to pay for statutory holidays even though Fern Flower – Nature School is closed on those days.

This policy helps ensure the financial sustainability of our Nature School services and supports the continued availability of quality care for your child.

Payment during Nature School closures:

Fern Flower – Nature School recognizes the importance of maintaining a healthy and dedicated team of educators to ensure the continued well-being and development of the children in our care. Therefore, the Nature School will undergo three closures per year, each lasting one week (see Nature School Closure Dates), during which educators will receive paid vacation. These closures are strategically planned to offer our staff the opportunity for rest and rejuvenation, contributing to their overall job satisfaction and effectiveness.

Families will be notified in advance of the scheduled closure weeks, and regular tuition fees will apply during these periods to support the provision of continuous high-quality care and to compensate educators for their dedicated service. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in fostering a positive and supportive environment for both our staff and your child.

Withdrawing from our Program:

If you no longer need care within our program, we require one (1) months' notice before the removal of your child.

Attendance and Closure

Attendance Notification Procedures:

1. Should a child be sick or absent from the Fern Flower - Nature School on a scheduled attendance day, the Nature School MUST be notified by 8:30 am (morning session) or 1:15pm (afternoon session) on the day of the absence at minimum.
2. Parents are expected to inform Nature School employees of possible non-attendance as soon as possible and with as much notification as possible.
3. Parents CANNOT drop off children after drop-off time as it can disrupt the class and other peers of the late child.
4. Parents are asked to give notification if an early Pick-Up of the child will occur, to avoid disruption to the other children during our day, also, educators will make sure that the child will be at the pick-up area rather than deep in the forest, etc.

What if the Educator/s gets sick?

At Fern Flower – Nature School, we always put everybody's safety first, including our staff. If any of our staff are sick, we will schedule a replacement immediately.

Nevertheless, if all our staff are sick and we can't find a replacement we will cancel the session and notify the families immediately. We are highly encouraging parents/guardians to make alternative childcare arrangements for the day.

The Nature School is permitted 12 unscheduled closures within a calendar year, these are sudden closures about illness or other such matters where the Nature School is unable to function and not regarding statutory holidays or other planned calendar closures. Parents are expected to pay the cost of tuition for these absent days unless the Fern Flower – Nature School has exceeded its yearly allotment of 12 days previously specified, in which case parents will be refunded the day's tuition or not charged.

Nature School Closure Dates:

Fern Flower - Nature School will be closed on all of the following Statutory Holidays:

- Family Day - Second Monday in February
- Good Friday – Friday before Easter Sunday
- Easter Monday – Monday After Easter Sunday
- Spring Break – One week in Springtime (Follow SD69) (1 week closure)(First week of Spring Break)
- Victoria Day – Monday before May 25th
- Canada Day – July 1st (or Monday Following)
- B.C. Day - Monday, August 1st
- Summer Closure - Last week of August until September first day after Labor Day (1 week closure)
- Labor Day – First Monday in September
- Truth and Reconciliation Day – September 31st
- Thanksgiving – Second Monday in October
- Remembrance Day – November 1st (or Monday Following)
- Winter Closure - Last week of December including Christmas Day 25th until New Year 1st (1 week closure) (We are open on January 2nd)

Pick-Up and Drop-Off Policy

Safe Release of Children:

A child in the care of FFNS will be released only to the person(s) identified by the guardians as those authorized to pick up the child. Authorization must be given in writing and can be done by fax or email directed to the main childcare office when advance arrangements are not possible. An authorized person who is unknown to the staff will be required to show a picture ID before the child is released into their care.

Child Entry:

Parents must give Fern Flower - Nature School written authorization for the people who may have access to their children (i.e., a relative who picks up the child, emergency contact in cases where parents cannot be reached). If written authorization is not possible, the parent must phone or email us to give authorization. Parents must notify NS before changing the usual pickup routine. We always act in the best interests of the child if there is any confusion or uncertainty.

| | Drop-Off Time | Pick-Up Time |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Morning Session | 8:00 to 8:30 a.m. | 11:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. |
| Afternoon Session | 12:45 to 1:15p.m. | 4:30 to 5:00 p.m. |

Late Pick-Up Fee Payment:

FERN FLOWER - NATURE SCHOOL CHARGES \$25.00 AND ADDITIONAL \$5.00 FOR EVERY MINUTE THAT THE PARENT/GUARDIAN IS LATE FOR PICK-UP AFTER CLOSING TIME MONDAY TO FRIDAY 12:15/5:00 PM (depends on the session child is attending).

The Fern Flower - Nature School is closed at 12:15 pm (Morning Session) or 5:00 pm (Afternoon Session) Monday – Friday and the employee who is staying behind is now babysitting your child. The payment is made out to the employee that has stayed behind and it can be arranged with the employee how the payment will be paid.

If you are constantly late – after 3 late pick-ups Fern Flower - Nature School can expel you from attending, it. No money will be refunded back to the family in that case.

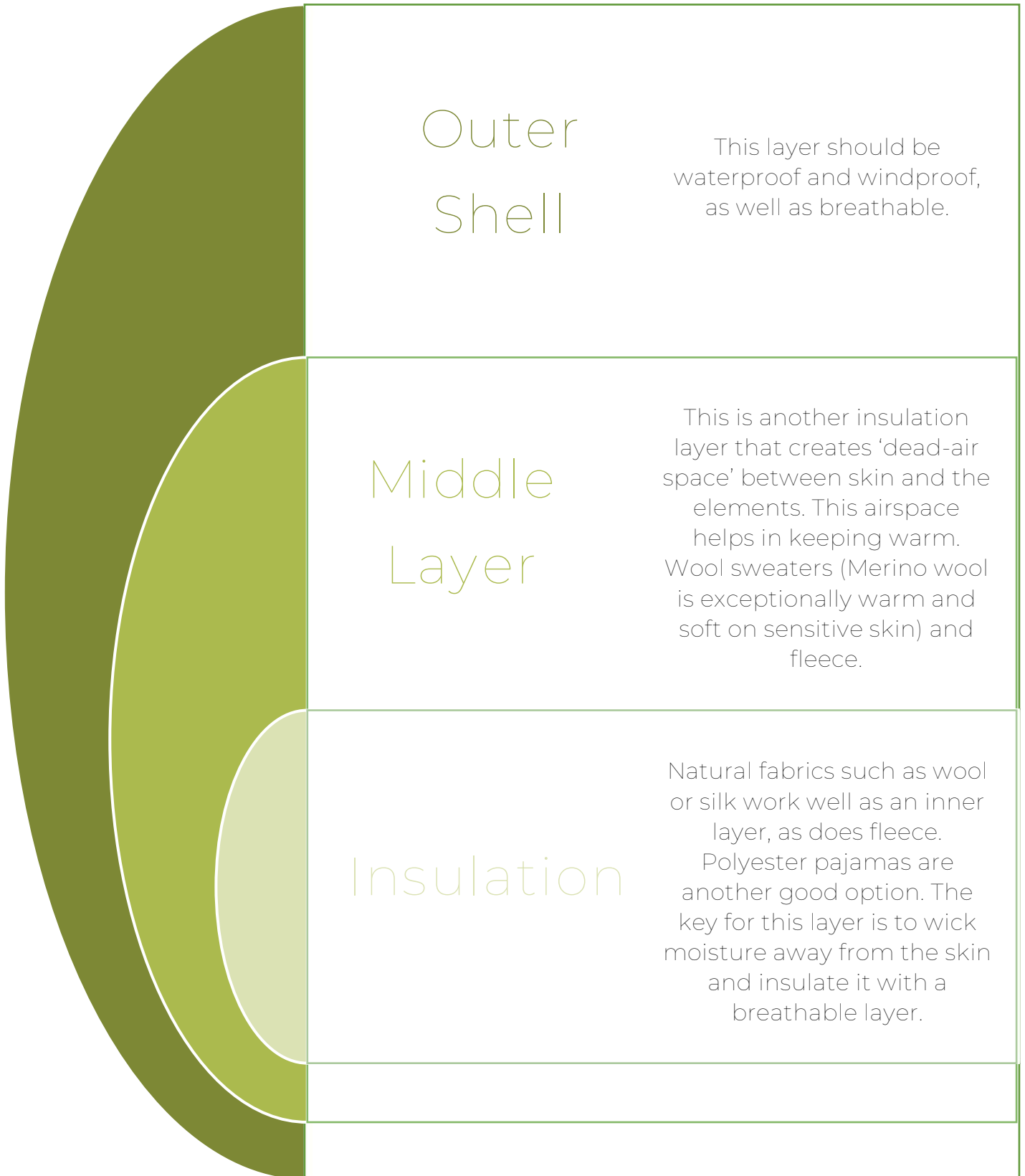
Clothing and Packing List for FFNS

Packing List for a child:

A major achievement of Nature School participants is experiencing and enduring the outdoors year-round. Our hands-on programs take place in all types of weather and usually require that we fully immerse ourselves in the environment. Children must come prepared for the day’s weather and with the understanding that it is ok to get dirty! Comfort and proper clothing are of utmost importance for your child’s learning experience. The packing list below is cold-weather specific and can be adjusted for warmer months. Please bring the following items to every session:

- Backpack of sufficient quality and comfort that your child can carry for distances of up to 500 meters at a time, and walks of up to 30 minutes long (must include a chest strap)
- Water bottle (filled with fresh water).
- Snacks and Utensils if needed.
- Spare Full Set of Clothes (t-shirt, pants, long sleeve shirt, underwear, socks).
- Extra Hat, Mittens, Balaclava.

Depending on the season, participants, including students, teachers, and accompanying volunteers, will need rain suits, boots, extra warm clothing, waterproof/warm snowsuits, extra hats and mitts, hiking shoes, sneakers, wool socks, thermal underwear, etc. For cold weather please consider the following factors when dressing for Nature School:



| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Winter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two winter hats (must cover ears and stay on the head). • Balaclava or neck warmer (no scarves please due to the risk of strangulation). • Two pairs of warm, waterproof mitts. • One warm, waterproof snowsuit. • One set of warm, waterproof boots. • Wool socks. • Three base layers: thermal shirt and pants, middle layer, wool/fleece sweater (cotton is not recommended for cold weather conditions). |
| Spring | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rain gear (waterproof boots, pants, jacket), with extra insulation on colder days. • Wool socks on colder days (they insulate even when wet). • Sneakers for running shoes (please no open-toe shoes even in summer). • Sun Hat (for warmer months). • Warmer sweater or jacket for colder days. • Bug Jacket (optional). |
| Summer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rain gear (waterproof boots, pants, jacket). • Sneakers for running (please no open-toe shoes even in summer). • Sun Hat. • Lightweight clothing (silk/cotton ideal, synthetic fibers do not breathe well). • Bug Jacket (optional). |
| Fall | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rain gear (waterproof boots, pants, jacket). • Sneakers for running (please no open-toe shoes even in summer). • Sun Hat (for warmer months). • Warm Jacket (fleece or other breathable fabric ideal). • Bug Jacket (optional). |
| At all Times | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A backpack of sufficient quality and comfort that your child can carry for distances of up to 500 meters at a time and walks of up to 30 minutes long (must include a chest strap). • Water bottle (filled with fresh water). • Snacks and Utensils if needed. • Spare Full Set of Clothes (t-shirt, pants, long sleeve shirt, underwear, socks). • Extra Hat, Mittens, Balaclava. |

RED is the preferred color choice for outdoor wear, for it provides the greatest contrast with the surrounding green forest.

A note to parents/caregivers:

It's not necessary to invest in expensive brand names to keep your child warm. Thrift stores are great places to look for children's wool clothing at cheaper prices.

In terms of boots, we recommend purchasing boots that are one size larger than your child's foot. Again, this creates dead-air space to assist in insulation. Socks help to wick moisture away from the skin, (please note cotton tends to sweat and doesn't do a great job at wicking moisture). The best foot insulator would be two pairs of wool socks with waterproof boots that have wiggle room.

For warmer weather, we ask that your child has a light cotton/silk/hemp long-sleeve shirt on for the day. Children are encouraged to always wear a hat. Also, it is amazing how cool it is when towering trees shade the walking paths.

Hair Appearance:

At our Nature School, we prioritize the safety and comfort of our young learners during outdoor adventures. To ensure an environment conducive to exploration, we kindly request that children come to school with their hair securely tied up or braided, keeping it off their faces. This simple guideline not only promotes safety by minimizing distractions during activities but also fosters a sense of unity and practicality in our outdoor setting. We appreciate the cooperation of parents and guardians in adhering to this policy, contributing to a positive and enjoyable learning experience surrounded by the wonders of nature.

Labelling:

Please label all your child's clothing and belongings. The teacher will label the items which have no identification with the sharp marker. Also, it will prevent items from getting lost!

What to Leave at Home:

No Home Toys in Nature School!

Bringing toys from home is discouraged. Personal toys can get dirty and broken and may cause problems when others want to play with them. Better yet — if your child would like to bring a doll, truck, or horse they can let us know and we could try making one out of natural materials. The forest holds cordage materials, acorns, wood, sticks (there are hundreds of things to do with a stick!), mud, bark, leaves and so many things for your child to play with! Encourage your child that their beloved toy will be waiting when they get home, but they can create a toy at Nature School. We do make exceptions for special items like bikes, sleds, etc. on those Bike Days or so.

Lost Items Policy:

Fern Flower - Nature School is not responsible for any lost or stolen items while on site. We encourage parents to label everything coming with their child to help ensure it ends up back home. Any items left at NS will be placed in a Lost & Found, which will be made available on request after a month the items will be donated to the local thrift store.

Damages Policy:

The FFNS takes responsibility for the normal wear and tear of the Nature School facility's equipment and toys. However, if a child willfully damages or destroys toys, equipment, or personal belongings within the facility the repair or replacement will be at the cost of the parents.

The Nature School will not be held responsible for damages to any belongings the child brings to the center. This includes any assistive devices. Please ensure such devices are insured should such an incident occur.

Toileting and Handwashing

FFNS requires that all participants are fully toilet trained before starting sessions.

If your child has an accident, educators will happily assist them in changing into their spare clothing. However, FFNS cannot accept children into the programs who are using diapers or pull-ups during the day. Please ensure that your child is independently using a toilet before the start of the session.

The washroom facilities at Fern Flower – Nature School are available while we are indoors or in the yard. Nevertheless, children must be comfortable using the “washroom” outdoors, with minimal “coaching” from an educator. All educators will carry appropriate toileting and hand washing tools such as toilet paper, wipes, hand sanitizer, water and soap.

Educators will provide children with hand washing opportunities before and after meals and after washroom breaks whether indoors or in nature. The educators will carry water hand soap and hand sanitizer for this purpose on each outing.

Poison Ivy Policy

Poison ivy is present in the woodlands at Fern Flower - Nature School. To limit exposure, we require that all participants wear long pants, long socks, and closed-toed shoes while taking part in our programs in all seasons. Washing affected skin within 15-60 minutes of exposure is likely to remove the oil that can lead to a reaction, so staff always carry potable water and soap. In the event of a participant coming in contact with poison ivy, we can wash the affected area immediately.

Snakes Policy

Due to the nature of the Fern Flower Forest School sessions being held in a bush setting, there is always the possibility that a participant may encounter a snake.

Before first entry to the Nature School area participants will be taught basic safety procedures.

Tick Policy

Ticks are present at Fern Flower - Nature School. To limit exposure, we require that all participants wear long pants, long socks, and closed-toed shoes while taking part in our sessions

in all seasons. We suggest that participants tuck their pant legs into their socks and shirts into their pants to also limit possible tick exposure. We recommend using insect repellent to deter ticks. If a tick is seen on a participant, it will be brushed off. If a tick is attached, we will remove it using tweezers or a tick key and save it in a baggie. Parents/guardians will be informed at pickup and allowed to take the tick to the health unit for testing.

For more information about ticks in British Columbia, we recommend visiting the website:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/animals-and-crops/planthealth/insects-and-plant-diseases/home-garden/ticks>

Bug and Sun Protection

Fern Flower - Nature School requires all participants to arrive with sunscreen and bug spray applied. Participants may bring extra if it will need to be re-applied later in the program. NS facilitators will assist participants in re-application if needed.

NOTE: It is very important to do a thorough tick check after Nature School! Removing a tick early and safely is a great defence against tick-borne illness. Always save the tick in a zip-lock bag to have for testing if necessary.

- A brimmed hat is one of the best defenses against the sun and buzzing bugs!
- Consider both the child and the environment when deciding on insect deterrents. Those containing pyrethrin or DEET are highly effective but should never be used on children's skin. Note that long-lasting pyrethrin, sprayed on boots and pants, can be just as effective, but can also be hazardous to aquatic life if freshly sprayed (for example, that morning). Please read the cautionary labels. Many safe and natural bug sprays are available! Ask us for suggestions if you are unsure!
- Another great way to stay protected is with clothing. Keeping covered with long sleeves, long pants (and boots or socks over pants) and a wide-brim hat, are very safe and effective methods for dealing with both sun and bugs!
- A spring day when no leaves are on the trees, or even a sunny winter day, can expose your child to too much sun. Zinc-based sunscreens are suggested.

Field Trip Policy

Fern Flower - Nature School offers a variety of experiences both at and away from the Nature School. Field trips are a creative way to enrich a study and expand the learning environment. Our goal in FFNS is to have one(1) Field Trip a month. Parents will be notified at least a week before about the field trip and its location. FFNS will set a temporary "Home Base" at the field trip location.

During the field trip day, we are asking parents to drop off their child at the field trip location and pick the child up at the field trip location.

Also, teachers may decide and are encouraged to conduct short, unannounced field trips including but not limited to walks as a class around the perimeter of the building and/or nearby neighborhoods; trips to local playgrounds; and trips to local businesses.

Parent Involvement

We hope you will be excited to get involved in our Fern Flower - Nature School community. It is our goal to create a culture and community of connection, and we can't do that without you.

We also need your help to support your child's experience and extend the learning and connections beyond Fern Flower - Nature School. There are many ways you can be supportive, including having a positive attitude yourself about things your child does that might seem "yucky" or scary (getting wet or muddy, touching bugs and slugs, being outside in the cold) and role modelling being relaxed and happy about saying goodbye at drop-off time. We will communicate with you regularly about what we've been up to so you can ask your child questions; telling their stories is an important way for children to integrate their new knowledge. Feel free to ask us for even more information to answer your queries.

There are also opportunities for you to learn more about the mentoring model we use and become able to use some of the techniques yourself at home. A terrific resource is Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature, by Jon Young, Ellen Haas, and Evan McGown. At times, Primitive Pursuits offers adult programs, from weekend workshops to more intensive immersion programs.

Details are on the Primitive Pursuits website. We can also recommend similar experiences with other programs around the region, country, and world. Participation in any of these will help bring greater connection into your home and support your Nature Schooler's journey.

Privacy Policy

In registering your child for a program, you are providing Fern Flower – Nature School with sensitive information about your child.

FFNS collects this information to communicate with you (parents/guardians) and to protect your child's health and safety during our programs. Any personal data you give to us will be processed following the privacy legislation and will only be used for the purposes for which you have given consent. We will not share your details with third parties without your consent, except where we are legally compelled or obligated to do so.

Select pieces of information (allergies/medical conditions, emergency contacts) will be printed and kept in a binder marked "Authorized Personnel Only". The binder and/or an electronic document will be kept in the emergency backpack, which is always carried by a Nature School educator so that pertinent information will be quickly accessible in the event of an emergency.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you should have any questions or concerns about protecting the privacy of the information you provide us.

Please note that, with your consent, images may appear on our website, Facebook page and marketing material (including in the local newspaper).

Photos & Video Permission

Permission will be requested, via consent form before Fern Flower – Nature School takes place, to take photographs of participants for monitoring and evaluation purposes and suitable use

in publications for leaflets/materials/websites. Where permission is refused, we will aim to avoid photographing and videoing that child and blurring out faces wherever they appear in recorded material.

Video Camera Usage Policy

Purpose:

The purpose of this Video Camera Usage Policy is to outline the guidelines and procedures for the use of video cameras at Fern Flower - Nature School. These cameras are installed to ensure the safety and security of both teachers and children attending our Nature School. This policy is designed to protect the privacy and security of all individuals involved while maintaining transparency in the use of surveillance footage.

1. Camera Placement and Purpose:

- a. Video cameras are strategically placed in common areas, entrances, and outdoor play areas of Fern Flower - Nature School to monitor activities for the safety of children, staff, and visitors.
- b. Cameras are installed solely for security, safety, and operational purposes.

2. Access to Footage:

- a. Access to video footage is restricted to the Director only responsible for monitoring and maintaining the surveillance system.
- b. Parents or legal guardians will not have access to the video footage for any reason.
- c. Video footage will not be shared with any external parties, except as required by law enforcement or regulatory authorities.

3. Data Retention:

- a. Video footage will be stored securely and retained for a maximum of three (3) months, after which it will be automatically erased.
- b. In the event that video footage is required for an ongoing investigation or legal matter, the Director may extend the retention period as necessary, following legal requirements.

4. Consent and Notice:

- a. Parents and guardians will be informed of the presence of video cameras within the Nature School facility upon enrollment.
- b. Written consent for video camera usage will be included in the Nature School's enrollment agreement.

5. Maintenance and Security:

- a. The surveillance system will be maintained regularly to ensure proper functioning.
- b. Access to the surveillance system will be password-protected, and only authorized personnel will have access.
- c. Appropriate measures will be taken to safeguard the integrity and confidentiality of the video footage.

6. Legal Compliance:

a. The Nature School will comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations regarding video camera usage and data privacy.

7. Complaints and Concerns:

a. Parents or guardians with concerns regarding video camera usage may bring their issues to the Director, who will address them promptly and transparently.

8. Review and Updates:

a. This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its continued effectiveness and compliance with legal and operational requirements.

b. Any updates or changes to this policy will be communicated to parents and guardians.

By enrolling their children at Fern Flower - Nature School, parents and guardians acknowledge and agree to the terms outlined in this Video Camera Usage Policy. The Nature School is committed to using video cameras responsibly and solely for the safety and security of all individuals at our facility.

Illness Policy

Fern Flower - Nature School recognizes the effects of the spreading of germs and harbouring illnesses within the Nature School. Therefore, Fern Flower - Nature School strives to provide a clean environment free of illnesses. Fern Flower - Nature School must ensure that children who are sick/ill do not attend the Nature School until the illnesses have subsided.

All parents are informed about our program's management of children who are ill when reading and signing off on our policy booklet, which is included in their starting package.

Potential Health Risk:

Illnesses can cause severe potential health risks in a childcare environment. The spread of germs can lead to a decline in health for all the children and employees in contact with the illness.

Room staff will greet each child and discuss with the parent(s) any health problems or symptoms. The parent(s) are responsible for informing the staff of any medications being administered at home in case of any reaction during the day.

Symptoms Causing Non-Attendance:

Parent(s) are responsible for keeping their child at home if they are displaying any of the following symptoms:

- A fever (38 degrees Celsius and higher), especially if the temperature is high or persistent.
- Diarrhea or vomiting (when 2-3 times per 3-4 hours).
- The child appears to have an undiagnosed rash/skin condition.
- The child has contracted a communicable disease (other than an upper respiratory tract infection).
- The child is showing signs of an obviously infected discharge (thick and coloured i.e.: brown, red, green)(runny nose any colour except clear).
- The child shows signs of lethargy and irritability.

- The child is claiming persistent pain.
- The child shows signs of a bad cough (frequent bouts: 2-3 times/hour), especially if choking or vomiting.
- The child has eye discharge, pink eye, or severe redness.

Illness Prevention:

1. **Hand Hygiene:**
 - a. All staff members, children, and visitors must practice proper hand hygiene by washing hands with soap and water regularly, especially after using the restroom, before meals, and after sneezing or coughing.
 - b. Hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol are available and encouraged for use when soap and water are not readily available.
2. **Respiratory Hygiene:**
 - a. Children and staff members are encouraged to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue or their elbow when coughing or sneezing.
 - b. Used tissues will be disposed of promptly and hands will be washed immediately afterward.
3. **Environmental Cleaning:**
 - a. Frequently touched surfaces, toys, and play equipment will be cleaned and sanitized regularly throughout the day.
 - b. Cleaning products used will be safe and effective for eliminating germs.
4. **Illness Education:**
 - a. Parents and guardians will be provided with information on recognizing symptoms of common illnesses and advised to keep children home when they exhibit signs of illness.
 - b. Educational materials on illness prevention will be prominently displayed within the daycare.

Illness Management:

1. **Exclusion Criteria:**
 - a. Children exhibiting symptoms of contagious illnesses, such as fever, vomiting, diarrhea, severe cough, or other symptoms as outlined in our illness guidelines, will be excluded from daycare until they are symptom-free for a specified period.
 - b. The daycare reserves the right to exclude children or staff with contagious illnesses to prevent the spread within the group.
2. **Communication:**
 - a. Parents or guardians are required to inform the daycare promptly if their child is diagnosed with a contagious illness.
 - b. The daycare will communicate known cases of contagious illnesses to other parents or guardians, while maintaining confidentiality.
3. **Return Policy:**

- a. Children may return to daycare once they are symptom-free for a specified period, as determined by our illness guidelines.
- b. A doctor's note may be required for certain illnesses before a child is readmitted.

Immunization appointments:

In adherence to our commitment to maintaining a healthy and safe environment for all children attending Nature School, we have implemented a policy regarding post-immunization appointments. Following an immunization appointment, the child must remain at home for 24 hours. This precautionary measure aims to ensure the child's well-being and allows for any potential post-immunization symptoms to manifest. Once the 24-hour period has elapsed and the child is symptom-free, they are welcome to return to Fern Flower - Nature School, promoting a secure and conducive learning environment for everyone. This policy aligns with our dedication to the health and welfare of our students and reflects our ongoing efforts to uphold the highest standards of care within our educational community.

Head Lice Policy

In our Nature School, the health and well-being of every child are of utmost importance. If head lice are detected in a child, parents or guardians will be promptly notified, and the child will be temporarily sent home. We kindly request that the child undergo the recommended lice treatment before returning to the Nature School. To foster a lice-free environment, we have implemented comprehensive prevention measures within the facility. These include regular educational programs on personal hygiene, routine checks, and the use of preventive products. By working together with parents and staff, we aim to create a daycare setting that prioritizes the health and comfort of all children in our care.

If head lice or nits are present, we ask that you:

- Contact staff at Fern Flower - Nature School immediately so that other families can be informed (the affected individuals will remain anonymous)
- Follow the treatment suggestions on the information sheet provided by BC Public Health

Medication Administration Policy

Parents must bring all medications to Fern Flower – Nature School staff – they will be stored and administered by staff. Parents are to fill out the necessary sections of the [Medication Administration Form](#) with regard to medications. Only, FFNS staff will administer the medication to a child and will keep documentation about it.

Immunization Records Policy

Parents may be asked to provide copies of children's Immunization Records for Fern Flower – Nature School to keep on file, however, at this time filling out the appropriate section of the [Registered Participant Information Form](#) will suffice. If you decide not to vaccinate them due to medical, religious or philosophical reasons, you will need to provide us with a valid written exemption and completion of the 'Statement of Conscience or Religious Belief' Affidavit. If the disease appears at FFNS, your child may have to stay home until the disease is no longer present.

Food Policies

Fern Flower - Nature School will NOT provide snacks and meals to children in care.

Canada's Food Guide FAQs:

To stay at a healthy weight and prevent disease, Canada's Food Guide recommends that you make it a habit to eat a variety of healthy foods each day, limit highly processed foods, and be aware of things that can shape the food choices you make.

Choosing healthy foods:

When you choose healthy foods regularly, you can start to make healthy eating a pattern. Patterns of healthy eating help keep you well and lower your risk for disease. Here are things you can do to make healthy eating a pattern for you.

1. *Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit.*
 - At meals, try to fill half your plate with vegetables and fruits. And make sure the types you choose have a good variety of colors, textures, and shapes that you enjoy.
 - Choose vegetables and fruits for snacks during the day, too.
 - Vegetables and fruits can be fresh, frozen, or canned. Just make sure you choose options with little to no added sugar, salt, or seasonings and sauces.
2. *Eat whole-grain foods.*
 - Whole grains have more nutrients than refined grains, and more fiber, too.
 - Choose whole-grain options for bread, oats, rice, and pasta. Quinoa is a good choice for a whole grain, too.
3. *Eat a variety of protein foods and include protein foods with healthy fats.*
 - Protein foods include things like eggs, lower-fat dairy products, lean meats and poultry, seafood, nuts and seeds, beans, peas, lentils, and soy products.
 - Choose the types that come from plants more often than the types that don't.
 - Choose foods that have less saturated fat.
 - Choose more foods with healthy fats, like nuts, seeds, avocado, fatty fish, and vegetable oils.
4. *Make water your drink of choice.*
 - A lot of drinks are high in calories, sugars, sodium, and fat.
 - Water is good for your health and helps you stay hydrated without adding calories to your diet.

Limiting processed foods:

Highly processed foods often have a lot of sugar, sodium, or saturated fat. Too much of these substances can increase your risk of high blood pressure, obesity, and type 2 diabetes.

Limit the amount of highly processed foods you eat. Some examples of these types of food include things like:

- Candy
- Jello or Pudding
- Fast food
- Sugary drinks or food
- Frozen meals (like pizzas, or premade dinners)
- Processed meats (like bacon and sausages)

In our care, we are promoting a healthy and nutritious diet. We highly recommend parents or guardians to make homemade meals for their children.

At Fern Flower - Nature School we believe in shared mealtime responsibilities:



The main rules to consider in Fern Flower - Nature School when parents/guardians are packing children's lunchboxes are:

- Parents will be asked to provide ice packs for children's lunch bags.
- Snack-Sharing: In addition, we ask that participants do not share or trade snacks, as this ensures the health, safety, and happiness of the community.
- Garbage-Less Lunches: We encourage participants to try to bring a garbage-less lunch. At the same time, we ask that parents/caregivers consider the size/weight/safety of the containers in which their child's snacks are packed. At FFNS, even our youngest children pride themselves on carrying their own snacks and water bottles on our adventures, which is made easier with small containers.
- Drinking Water: Parents/Guardians will be asked to bring a water bottle full of water before every NS session and the water bottle will be stored in the child's backpack. They will also be able to refill their water bottles on-site. Also, please remember that our establishment is JUICE-FREE POLICY! All juice will be sent home.
- Cooking/Nature tasting at Nature School: Sometimes during our learning children come across well-known plants which are eatable; children are welcome to try the

fruit/vegetable/herb only in case teachers are fully sure what it is. Also, sometimes we may host cooking classes with children where we can try something new. Nature School will make sure your child is following any kind of food restrictions or allergy requirements during the process.

- Litter-Less Lunches: We encourage parents/guardians to try and pack a litter-less lunch. At the same time, we ask that parents/guardians consider the size/ weight/safety of the containers in which their child's snacks are packed.

Source: HelthLinkBC (<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/ug2160>)

Dealing with Allergies:

Any children in the Fern Flower - Nature School who have allergies should be made known upon enrollment and written on the indicated spot of the enrollment form when first attending the Nature School or made known and noted on enrollment forms upon knowing of new allergies. Parents are expected to let the Nature School know IMMEDIATELY. All children with allergies will have their picture taken to be posted along with the indicated allergies in the classroom.

Special Events like Birthdays and Holidays:

During the events parents and teachers are welcome to bring special treats to celebrate the event. There will be a sign sheet provided for a parent to sign up who and what they are bringing. Also, we will write down any allergies in the classroom. Please, remember that Fern Flower - Nature School is promoting healthy and nutritious choices and will very much appreciate it when parents and guardians follow this rule. If you are concerned about allergies, please contact the educator so they can inform you in case somebody is allergic to anything.

Communication Policy

Generally, Fern Flower - Nature School will communicate with families, and school groups through their teachers, and predominantly via email or by phone. To reach us in a timely manner, please send an email to fernfloweratureschool@gmail.com or call/text [250-299-2054](tel:250-299-2054).

Please be sure to communicate the following:

- if you will be late/absent
- if any member of your group is ill with a communicable disease
- etc.

Parent / Nature School Meetings:

The Nature School generally has one (1) parent meetings a year held on the Nature School premises. The Nature School strives to make the meetings as easy as possible to attend.

The meetings are a time to discuss upcoming events, such as fundraisers, and parties, and to review the parent handbook and any changes made to it. Meetings are a time for parents' NS to be heard. Although it is not mandatory for a parent/guardian to attend the meetings, without

input from parents the Nature School has no way of knowing that needs are not being met and what you as the primary caregivers would like to see being done.

Complaint Policy and Procedures:

Fern Flower - Nature School recognizes that parents/guardians/families may have concerns, issues or complaints from time to time and want to encourage open communication with the Nature School so that issues are addressed immediately.

If a parent/guardian has a concern, issue or complaint to make about any of the following items listed below, he/she can arrange for a private meeting with the Director or Manager:

- Nature School cleanliness (appearance and up-keep) and maintenance of facilities.
- A specific policy or procedure; About another child.
- Food Policy.
- Hours of operation.
- Program objectives and tasks.
- Communication.
- Payment of fees; and
- Other.

For all other complaints, there is a suggestion box and form that can be filled out underneath the parent board. If it cannot be said at pick-up or drop-off times, feel free to talk to the Director or Manager personally. All complaints will be addressed and resolved in a timely manner. We value parent communication, and it is important to us.

Emergency Communication:

In the event of an emergency at Fern Flower - Nature School, parents/guardians will be contacted by phone once emergency personnel (if needed) have been contacted.

If an emergency occurs during an FFNS session, the student's classroom teacher will contact parents/emergency contact by phone once emergency personnel (if needed) have been contacted.

If weather/road conditions make travel to/from NS dangerous for staff/participants and NS needs to cancel programs or close early for the day, parents (community-based program) or FFNS teachers will be notified by phone.

Questions and Concerns:

- Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask to speak with Fern Flower - Nature School staff during drop-off/pick-up times, text by phone or email, also if you have a major concern, we always can arrange an emergency parent-educator meeting after Nature School hours. As mentioned above, if you require an extended or more focused conversation, please communicate this request via email.
- Similarly, should Fern Flower - Nature School staff have a question or concern requiring an extended or more focused conversation, this will be communicated via email or by phone.

- If you should have a complaint or concern that cannot be resolved directly with Fern Flower - Nature School staff either through an in-person conversation or via email – fernfloweratureschool@gmail.com, please bring that concern to Lera Lucas at **250-299-2054**.

Fundraising and Extra Events

Fern Flower - Nature School participates in many fundraisers. Our main fundraising events are:

- Recycle - parents can drop off bottles at any time. Bottles are taken to the bottle depot to collect a refund.
- Annual Bake Sale - this is held before the Holiday Season in December. Children and staff members will be making baked goods at the Nature School. Parents and the public are then invited to attend and purchase the baked goods, and other items with all proceeds going directly back into the classrooms for desired purchases.
- Children's Annual Art Show - is hosted at the Nature School once a year. Children work hard creating Artwork and other creations which families are then invited to attend and purchase their child's work. All profits made are returned back to the classrooms for desired purchases. Also, tea and small treats will be provided during the event.
- Annual Book Sale – Parents/guardians and staff members are encouraged to participate in our book sale. Parents and the public are invited to purchase the book, and it is up to you to decide how much you would like to pay for a book then the money goes directly back into the classrooms for desired purchases.
- Other fundraisers/events happen throughout the year such as Lemonade Stands, Parent's Night Out, Plants Sale, etc.

Fundraising is important for the Fern Flower - Nature School because it allows the children to have the extras which make the Nature School exciting. Events such as family suppers/barbeques, visits from Santa and holiday/occasion parties are all extras that fundraising covers. The fundraising earnings are also put towards renovations and up-keeps which are expected by the staff and Director.

Guidance Strategies and Documentation

Documentation

Documentation of Accidents/Incidents:

Staff members shall document accidents and incidents that occur at Fern Flower - Nature School using an [Accident/Incident Report](#). The parent shall sign the report on the same day as the incident. A copy may be given to the parent upon request. Then reports will be placed in the child's permanent file.

Day-to-Day Documentation:

Staff members shall document everyday activities that occur at Fern Flower - Nature School using a Child's File or Communication Book. A copy may be given to the parent upon request. Then reports will be placed in the child's permanent file.

Assessments

The Teaching Strategies is the assessment tool used by the programs to evaluate and track each child's individual development during their time at Fern Flower - Nature School. It is an ongoing assessment system, meaning that teachers are continually watching, observing, and documenting each child's development. The same tool is used from birth through kindergarten, to allow a more complete picture of your child's development. By tracking a child's development, our teachers can plan activities that are appropriate for each child's developmental abilities.

Parents-Teachers Conferences:

Lead Teachers are expected to offer a minimum of one parent-teacher conference per year and must make every effort to meet with each family. A copy of the parent-teacher conference form and child development summary must be placed in the child's permanent file after conferences. The Lead Teacher should discuss suitable times to hold conferences with the Director and/or Manager.

Assessment Portfolios:

A permanent assessment portfolio will be kept for each child and passed to the next teacher when a child transitions. These portfolios will not be released to anyone outside Fern Flower - Nature School Learning Nature School without written permission from the parent/guardian. Assessment portfolios will contain a variety of items, including photographs, examples of artwork, assessment

profiles, and parent-teacher conference forms. It is the responsibility of the Lead Teacher and Full Time Assistant Teacher to ensure portfolios are periodically and continuously updated.

Portfolios may be periodically taken home by families but should be returned promptly. When a child leaves Fern Flower - Nature School, the assessment portfolio should be given to the family.

Guidance Strategies

Every adult who cares for children has a responsibility to guide, correct and socialize children toward appropriate behaviors. These adult actions often are called child guidance and discipline. Positive guidance and discipline are crucial because they promote children's self-control, teach children responsibility and help children make thoughtful choices. The more effective caregivers are at encouraging appropriate child behavior, the less time and effort adults will spend correcting children's misbehavior.

Effective guidance and discipline focus on the development of the child. They also preserve the child's self-esteem and dignity. Actions that insult or belittle are likely to cause children to view their caregivers negatively, which can inhibit learning and teach the child to be unkind to others. However, actions that acknowledge the child's efforts and progress, no matter how slow or small, are likely to encourage healthy development. Teaching children self-discipline is a demanding task. It requires patience, thoughtful attention, cooperation and a good understanding of the child. Fern Flower - Nature School staff will use only positive guidance techniques.

When interacting with young children, staff will ask themselves the following questions:

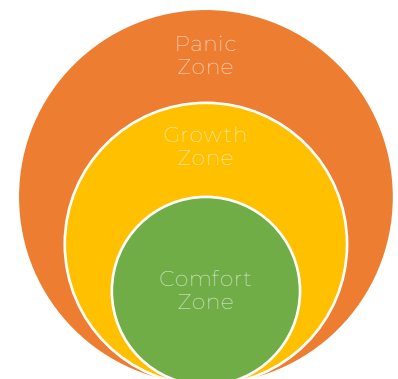
“ Am I... ”

- Validating feelings?
- Using praise and positive reinforcement?
- Encouraging problem-solving?
- Asking open-ended questions?
- Talking with children – not at them?
- Respecting children's choices?
- Circulating throughout the classroom?
- At the child's eye level?

Challenge by Choice

At Fern Flower - Nature School, we believe in the concept of Challenge by Choice, where students are presented with an opportunity (or challenge) and they are empowered to decide how they will participate or engage in the activity. We encourage students to challenge themselves and participate fully in the experience at hand; however, fully respect the decision of the child and their personalized level of engagement.

All students are asked to add value to the experience by finding a way to contribute to the group's efforts in a way that is meaningful and authentic for them. Creating a space that reflects a Challenge by



Choice environment enables students to feel comfortable expanding their comfort zone by moving into their growth zone, without stepping into their panic zone. We believe that this is the zone of optimal development, where great opportunities for growth and learning exist.

Getting comfortable getting uncomfortable: We encourage regular small steps into the growth zone – that’s where the learning happens. But not so big as to trigger the panic zone!

Biting Policy

Biting is a behavior that usually appears between the ages of one and three years. While biting is an age-appropriate behavior, it is important to remember it is also an unacceptable behavior in a childcare environment. Children bite for a variety of reasons: teething, sensory exploration, cause and effect, imitation, crowding, seeking attention, frustration, and stress. Biting is not something to blame on children, their parents, or their teachers. There are a variety of strategies we implement at Fern Flower - Nature School to prevent and stop biting. Due to the age of the children at Fern Flower - Nature School, we have a Biting policy by which we will be taking action:

1. 1 bite (in one day) – The child gets a warning, also the parent gets immediately notified.
2. 2 bites (in one day) – after the 2nd time child will be sent HOME.
3. 3+ bites – if the child has a tendency to bite other children, they can terminate the care at FFNS.

Emergency Procedure:

Due to licensing regulations, the Fern Flower - Nature School will be practicing Emergency Procedures.

- FIRE DRILLS WILL BE PRACTICED MONTHLY
- TORNADO/EARTHQUAKE DRILLS WILL BE PRACTICED YEARLY
- EMERGENCY EVACUATION DRILL WILL BE PRACTICED YEARLY

Blizzard/Severe Winter Weather:

In the event that the weather makes it unsafe for travel and we need to cancel programs for that day, we will notify you by the shared teacher: website, email and telephone (if need be) at least one hour before the time the program would have started. In the event that the weather makes it necessary for FFNS to close earlier than normal, every effort will be made to contact each parent/guardian by telephone. In the event parents/guardians cannot be contacted, emergency contact people will be called. Staff will always remain with children until they are picked up.

Also, we will be following School District #69 and Bowser Elementary School for closure updates. The day of closure will not be reimbursed.

School District #69 – [https://www.sd69.bc.ca/Pages/default.aspx#/="](https://www.sd69.bc.ca/Pages/default.aspx#/=)
Bowser Elementary School - [https://www.sd69.bc.ca/school/BES/Pages/default.aspx#/="](https://www.sd69.bc.ca/school/BES/Pages/default.aspx#/=)

Power Failure:

Staff members and children proceed with activities as usual if it is possible to.

In Nature School, we have back-up Power Generators and Emergency Lights. In case of complications, then the Nature School will close, and parents contacted.

Extreme Weather Policy

Educators and volunteers at Fern Flower - Nature School consult the forecast regularly, and weather-related safety is considered in all decision-making.

In the case of predicted thunder and lightning or high winds, NS educators/volunteers will ensure participants are close to shelter so that it may be sought quickly should thunder and lightning or high winds occur. During thunder and lightning and high winds, participants will stay under shelter or in the center.

In the case of extreme cold (-25C or below) or extreme heat (30C), NS educators/volunteers will limit participants' length of exposure based on age/outerwear, and will constantly assess participants' comfort and safety, watching for signs of frostbite, hypothermia, heat exhaustion, etc.

Wildlife Safety

Before starting the session, please check <https://warp.wildsafebc.com> to know if there are any wild animal reports around the area.

Fern Flower - Nature School employees all have Wildlife Safety training and are aware of how to act around wild animals, also FFNS has bear spray in the backpack in case of emergency.

If FFNS has been notified about wild animals in the area children and educators will be staying at the local park (near Home Base) and use the Nature School Yard.

Contact the [Conservation Officer Service](#): at 1-877-952-7277 (RAPP) or #7277 on the TELUS Mobility Network, to report wildlife-human interactions where public safety may be at risk.

Other important information. What you need to know...

Risk Management

Risk - the experience and management of it - is an inherent and integral part of Nature School, and indeed of healthy child development. Fern Flower - Nature School educators and volunteers' endeavor to co-assess and co-manage risk with participants, including FFNS students, teachers, and accompanying volunteers. We believe this to be an essential skill for children to acquire and for adults to support. NS educators and volunteers conduct seasonal site risk assessments, as well as activity risk assessments and individual risk assessments on an ongoing basis, always considering the balance between risks and benefits when doing so.

Some of the risks inherent to NS and outdoor play include, but are not limited to:

- Injuries from executing strenuous and demanding physical activities, possibly on uneven ground in the forest.
- Injuries from failing to properly use tools such as carving knives.
- Injuries resulting from matches or fire.
- Contracting poison ivy.
- The presence of wild animals and ticks.
- Inclement Weather.

Animal Policy

Wild Animal/s:

Children are always curious about animals. We believe in do not hurt/kill it also affects bugs, small lizards, fish, and big animals. Educators must be always in the Nature School of animal/child interaction. Remember if you encounter dangerous wild animals, you must follow *Wildlife Safety* (each animal has different protocols to be able to stay safe).

Domestic Animal/s:

As you know we are out a lot and may encounter somebody's pets. Children are always curious about animals, so we encourage children not to pet animals immediately. Children must ask first the owner of the animal and be mindful that the animal can get overwhelmed easily because of the number of children. Educators *must* monitor children during animal-child interaction. Note – if you encounter a domestic animal that you don't know or it looks aggressive



Fern Flower - Nature School
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you as an educator must inform everybody about the danger, gather all children and maintain a safe distance from the animal. Perform *Wildlife Safety* if the animal is aggressive. We welcome parents/caregivers to bring their friendly animals for pick up and drop off.

FFNS's Animal/s:

Currently, the Director has pets at her home who are friendly and are welcome to interact with Fern Flower - Nature School clients. So, you may encounter animals from time to time. In the future FFNS will get some farm animals like ducks and bunnies.

Parking

You are welcome to park at 3827 Charlton Drive, near the park or at the end of the street closer to Rose Park. Please, remember not to block anybody's driveway or cars. Thank you for staying mindful.