



Nature School

Parent Handbook Pocket Guide

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Fern Flower - Nature School
Location: 3827 Charlton Dr, Qualicum Beach, BC V9K1Z3
Phone Number: 250-299-2054
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This Parent Handbook is intended to familiarize families and care givers with current Fern Flower - Nature School policy, practices, and standards. An electronic version (PDF) of the handbook is available on our website at www.fernfloweratureschool.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

Website: fernfloweratureschool.net

Our Programs:

- 🌿 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 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!

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.

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 is a learning approach that focuses on children's natural curiosity and exploration of the natural environment. It uses inquiry-based learning, where students' questions and ideas are at the center of the learning experience. Teachers provide tools and resources to encourage students to investigate, reflect, and discuss potential solutions to their own questions. In Fern Flower - Nature School, the focus is on building upon children's experiences and emerging ideas, fueling deeper understanding of knowing, learning, and being. This approach can lead to a lifelong passion for learning.

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.

Different Learning Techniques and Strategies

Play-Based Learning:

- Symbolic play in Forest and Nature School groups involves children using symbols to represent people, ideas, or qualities, including sticks and rocks for "little people".
- Exploratory play involves kids engaging with an environment, assessing its properties, possibilities, and content through manipulation or movement, a common practice in Forest and Nature Schools.
- Socio-dramatic play is allowing children to enact real-life experiences, such as bedtime or family holidays, while balancing parent and child roles.
- Dramatic play allows children to reenact events from various sources, such as TV shows, movies, or celebrities.

- Social play is a social interaction where children agree on activities, roles, and challenges. In Forest and Nature School, most play is social, with children discussing rules and protocols. For example, a group might build a "bakery" and have heated discussions about roles. Despite potential disagreements, children follow the rules they created together, allowing them to play happily for an entire session.
- Communication play at Forest and Nature School involves words, gestures, mime, jokes, singing, debate, and poetry, often involving older groups and reserved students.
- Creative play (inventive play) is when children use their imagination, involving young children creating 2- and 3-dimensional designs using pinecones, sticks, bark, and stones, and using natural materials for music.
- Deep play involves children conquering fears through high-risk experiences, often involving climbing, such as climbing trees or logs in FFNS.
- A fantasy play, where kids imagine having special powers like flying, involving superheroes or magic.
- Imaginative play involves children imagining the forest and its elements as anything they want. People and objects take on imaginary roles, and these are constantly in flux. For example, a fort structure might start as a ship and later morph into an island. The ground changes frequently, and children need to join the group for safety.
- Locomotor play encourages active play such as hide and seek, climbing, hanging, ziplining, rolling down hills, and balance on fallen logs.
- Mastery play involves controlling the natural environment through activities like digging holes, changing stream course, and gaining new skills. Young people in FFNS groups engage in these activities.
- The recapitulative play explores human evolutionary history, with children building fires, pretending to light them, and creating shelter villages in Forest and Nature Schools, despite restrictions.
- Rough and Tumble play is a form of physical exercise that involves testing limits, play-fighting, and chasing within safety guidelines.

Place-Based Learning

Childhood connection begins in specific places and extends beyond them. Place-based learning connects children to a particular place through direct experiential contact, providing familiarity and understanding processes of change. This connection leads to a sense of responsibility for caretaking and protection, increasing a sense of belonging and stewardship for the place and community. Place-based educators call this the "pedagogy of community" as it reintegrates individuals into their home ground and restores essential links between a person and their place. Forest and Nature Schools help young people forge this sense of place.

Storytelling

The Nature School offers a holistic and child-directed approach to learning, incorporating oral storytelling into various activities such as folktales, fairy tales, riddles, rhymes, myths, fables, legends,

and personal stories. Oral storytelling is a powerful form of education, entertainment, and sharing, allowing children to express emotions, describe experiences, enhance imagination, and develop listening skills. It also helps children learn sequencing, rhythm, vocabulary, and the meaning of new words. Verbalizing memories boosts language and memory skills, and it boosts self-esteem. Sharing tales about family history and folklore is crucial for cognitive and emotional development. Stories provide a safe space for children to explore life, take risks, and face fears. It also help children empathize with the teller, hero, and situation, practicing empathy. Stories can transport children to other times and places, expressing universal truths relevant to their lives, and helping them discover themselves.

Loose Parts

Fern Flower - Nature School is inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach and encourages children to use loose parts in their projects. Forest and Nature School also incorporates loose parts from nature, such as sticks, rocks, and pine needles, to foster creativity and interaction among different people and groups. Both schools encourage children to explore and use loose parts in their learning experiences.

Wildschooling

Wildschooling is a movement that supports our connection with nature, recognizing it as a fundamental human need. It respects the whole child, favors place-bonded learning, and aligns with nature's rhythms. KFNS believes children need to bond with nature, connecting to their local habitat, biome, and community, preserving ancestral knowledge and stories.

Tools in Nature School

Nature School uses the same tools as the Design Technology curriculum, including potato peelers, palm drills, small knives, and bow saws. The Forest School Leader supervises the use of these tools, maintaining a 1:8 ratio. Safety talks are given each session, and if a child is not using a tool safely, the activity is stopped. Gloves are on-site and can be worn if needed. All activities using tools are fully risk-assessed. The NS Leader or assisting staff is responsible for demonstrating the correct use of each tool, including transportation. Tools are kept in a locked cupboard and not worn by the hand(s) controlling the tool.

How does the Curriculum look at FFNS

Curriculum:

Fern Flower - Nature School offers a curriculum that includes child-initiated and teacher-directed activities for young children, promoting physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. The curriculum is designed to be curated for each child and group, with weekly lesson plans adjusting to individual interests. Classrooms are set up in Nature Schools, promoting creative expression and social skill development.

Daily Activities:

The Lead Teacher, Assistants, and Volunteers collaborate to create a daily schedule and activities that cater to each child's developmental needs. Consistency is crucial for the well-being of children and the classroom environment. Routines are maintained for arrivals, departures, meals, snacks, resting, fire circle gatherings, personal care, and transitions. Lesson plans and schedules are posted in the classroom.

Project Studies:

Project studies are a practical method for curriculum planning, based on daily knowledge and interests of children. Age-appropriate, they can last a week or month, and teachers coordinate activities.

Physical Environment:

The Program Lead Teacher and Full-Time Assistant Teacher are responsible for room arrangement in each program room, following Environment Rating Scales. Rooms should include blocks, dramatic play, art, motors, and books, with clear boundaries. Quiet areas should be set away from noisy activities. Room décor should feature child artwork and photographs. Staff must approve changes to the physical environment.

Free Play:

Teachers should actively participate in free play activities, asking questions, participating in pretend play, reading books, and encouraging children to try new activities or toys.

Multimedia:

Our program incorporates multimedia, extending classroom teaching with movie, television, and computer game titles. Children are limited to 1 hour weekly multimedia use, with occasional 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

Our Nature School aims to provide a nature-centric learning environment for children. Our Screen Time Policy guides educators, parents, and families in promoting balanced screen time practices. Screen time includes electronic devices, and is limited to 30 minutes per day for all age groups. Content selection is carefully chosen to align with our educational objectives and environmental education. Regular communication between educators and parents is promoted to maintain a supportive approach to screen time management. The effectiveness of the policy will be regularly reviewed to assess its impact on children's well-being and development. In exceptional circumstances, decisions will be made collaboratively between educators and parents.

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.

<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

At our Nature School, effective supervision is crucial for the safety and well-being of children. It prevents accidents and injuries, and our staff actively monitors children to identify and minimize risks. We recognize the developmental stage of each child, with younger children needing continuous monitoring and older ones benefiting from a balanced approach. Our commitment to effective supervision not only ensures children's safety but also promotes a positive learning environment. This policy outlines guidelines for our care and supervision.

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.

Registration

Parents must complete FFNS registration forms and family contracts before attending Fern Flower - Nature School. Families receive a Parent Handbook and must arrange payment. If a child withdraws from a spot, a one-month withdrawal fee is charged. Registration includes a \$50.00 non-refundable deposit, and failure to accept the first opportunity results in removal.

Payment Policy

Childcare Service Rates Before Reduction:

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

	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 (0 to 18 months)	1,150.00 \$ / month	1,050.00 \$ / month	850.00 \$ / month	650.00 \$ / month	350.00 \$ / month	100.00 \$ per session

Morning or Afternoon Sessions (18 to 36 months)	1,130.00 \$ / month	950.00 \$ / month	750.00 \$ / month	550.00\$ / month	300.00 \$ / month	90.00 \$ per session
Morning or Afternoon Sessions (3 to 5 years of age)	1,000.00 \$ / month	850.00 \$ / month	650.00 \$ / month	450.00 \$ / month	250.00 \$ / month	75.00 \$ per session
Morning or Afternoon Sessions (Kindergarten)	640.00 \$ / month	550.00 \$ / month	450.00 \$ / month	350.00 \$ / month	250.00 \$ / month	75 \$ per session
Morning or Afternoon Sessions (Grade 1 to 12 years)	600.00 \$ / month	550.00 \$ / month	450.00 \$ / month	350.00 \$ / month	250.00 \$ / month	50.00 \$ per session

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 E-Transfers made to fernflownatureschool@gmail.com or cash.

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.

Sick Day Payments:

Fern Flower - Nature School acknowledges that unforeseen circumstances may necessitate temporary absences, but regular tuition fees remain applicable. This policy ensures qualified staff availability, facility maintenance, and essential resources for a safe environment. Open communication with staff is encouraged for necessary accommodation or support.

Vacation Day or Absent Day Payments:

Fern Flower – Nature School mandates regular tuition payments during vacations or skipped days to maintain program stability. No discounts or reductions are available, and failure to make timely payments may lead to enrollment suspension.

Payment during Statutory Holidays:

Fern Flower – Nature School in British Columbia, Canada, will close on all statutory holidays recognized by the government, ensuring transparency and effective communication. Families are required to pay for these holidays, ensuring the school's financial sustainability and quality care for children.

Payment during Nature School closures:

Fern Flower – Nature School will undergo three annual closures, each lasting one week, to maintain a healthy and dedicated team of educators. These closures provide paid vacations for staff, enhancing job satisfaction and effectiveness. Families will be notified in advance and regular tuition fees will apply to support high-quality care.

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. If a child is 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?

Fern Flower – Nature School prioritizes safety, with staff replacements scheduled if necessary. If all staff are sick, sessions are cancelled, and families are encouraged to make alternative childcare arrangements. The school permits 12 unscheduled closures per year, with parents responsible for tuition costs unless the school exceeds its allotment.

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:

FFNS children are released to authorized individuals, who must provide written authorization and provide a picture ID. Unknown authorized individuals must show a photo ID before being released into their care.

Child Entry:

Parents must provide written authorization for anyone accessing their children, including relatives or emergency contacts. If not possible, parents must contact NS. The school will act in the child's best interests.

	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).

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:

Nature School participants experience outdoor activities year-round, immersing themselves in various weather conditions. To ensure a comfortable learning experience, children should bring a comfortable backpack, water bottle, snacks, utensils, spare clothing, and extra clothing. The packing list is cold-weather specific and can be adjusted for warmer months. Please bring the following items to every session:

- Backpack (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:

Outer Shell	This layer should be waterproof and windproof, as well as breathable.
Middle Layer	This is another insulation layer that creates ‘dead-air space’ between skin and the elements. This airspace helps in keeping warm. Wool sweaters (Merino wool is exceptionally warm and soft on sensitive skin) and fleece.
Insulation	Natural fabrics such as wool or silk work well as an inner layer, as does fleece. Polyester pajamas are another good option. The key for this layer is to wick moisture away from the skin and insulate it with a breathable layer.

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.

Hair Appearance:

Nature School prioritizes safety and comfort for young learners by requiring children to wear securely tied hair during outdoor adventures. This policy minimizes distractions and fosters unity in the outdoor setting, requiring cooperation from parents and guardians.

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!

Toys brought from home are discouraged as they can get dirty and cause problems. Instead, children can create their own toys using natural materials like cordage, acorns, wood, sticks, mud, bark, and leaves. Special items like bikes and sleds can be made during Bike Days.

Lost Items Policy:

Fern Flower - Nature School is not responsible for lost or stolen items, but parents are encouraged to label items and donate them to a Lost & Found section after a month.

Damages Policy:

The FFNS is responsible for normal wear and tear of the Nature School's equipment and toys, but will not be held responsible for damages to children's personal belongings or assistive devices.

Toileting and Handwashing

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

Fern Flower – Nature School offers assistance for accidents and provides washroom facilities for children to use independently. However, diapers or pull-ups cannot be accepted. Educators carry appropriate tools for toileting and hand washing and provide opportunities for washing before and after meals and washroom breaks, both indoors and outdoors.

Bug and Sun Protection

Fern Flower - Nature School requires all participants to arrive with sunscreen and bug spray applied.

Field Trip Policy

Fern Flower - Nature School conducts monthly field trips, providing creative learning experiences. Parents are notified about the trip and location, and a temporary "Home Base" is set up. Parents drop off and pick up their child 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.

Privacy Policy

Registrating your child for a program at Fern Flower – Nature School involves providing sensitive information to communicate with parents and protect their child's health and safety. Personal data is processed following privacy legislation and shared only with consent. Information like allergies and emergency contacts is stored in binders and emergency backpacks. If you have concerns about privacy, contact the school. Images may appear on the school's website, Facebook page, and marketing materials.

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

This outlines the use of video cameras at Fern Flower - Nature School, ensuring the safety and security of teachers and children. The cameras are strategically placed in common areas, entrances, and outdoor play areas, and are only accessible to the Director responsible for monitoring and maintaining the surveillance system. Parents or legal guardians are not allowed access to the footage, and it will only be shared with law enforcement or regulatory authorities. Video footage will be securely stored for a maximum of three months, with the Director extending the retention period as needed. Parents and guardians are informed of the presence of video cameras upon enrollment and written consent is included in the enrollment agreement. The policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with legal and operational requirements.

Illness Policy

Fern Flower - Nature School prioritizes germ-free environments and prevents illness spread. Parents are informed about the program's management of sick children through a policy booklet included in their starting package. Children should not attend until illnesses subside.

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.

Child must be symptom free for at least 24 hours before returning to Nature School.

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 child care until they are symptom-free for a specified period.
 - b. The child care 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 child care promptly if their child is diagnosed with a contagious illness.
 - b. The child care will communicate known cases of contagious illnesses to other parents or guardians, while maintaining confidentiality.
3. Return Policy:
 - a. Children may return to child care 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:

Fern Flower - Nature School has implemented a policy requiring children to stay home for 24 hours after an immunization appointment to ensure their well-being and allow for potential symptoms to manifest. This policy reflects the school's commitment to student health and welfare.

Head Lice Policy

The Nature School prioritizes the health and well-being of every child. If head lice are detected, parents or guardians are notified and the child is temporarily sent home. They request the child undergo lice treatment before returning. Comprehensive prevention measures include regular hygiene education, routine checks, and preventive products.

Medication Administration Policy

Parents are required to bring medications to Fern Flower – Nature School staff, fill out the Medication Administration Form, and ensure FFNS staff administer and document the medication.

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.

Choosing healthy foods:

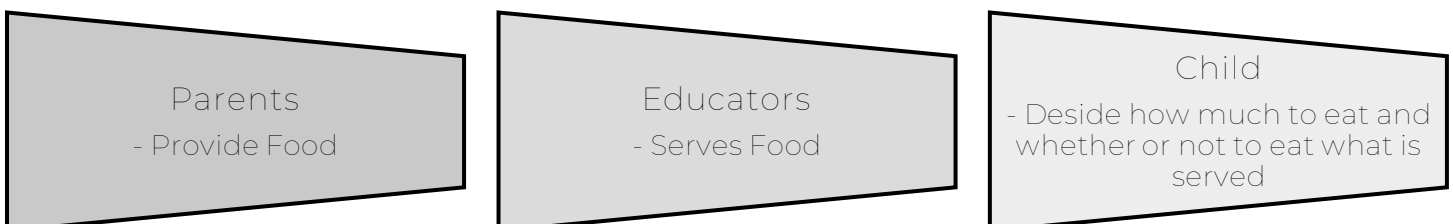
To maintain a healthy diet, regularly choose vegetables and fruits, including fresh, frozen, and canned options with minimal added sugar, salt, or seasonings. Choose whole-grain foods for bread, oats, rice, and pasta, and quinoa for whole grains. Choose protein foods with healthy fats, including plant-based options, less saturated fat, and more healthy fats like nuts, seeds, avocado, fatty fish, and vegetable oils. Make water your drink of choice to stay hydrated without adding calories to your diet. This will help lower your risk of disease and maintain overall health.

Limiting processed foods:

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)

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.
- No Snack-Sharing at FFNS.
- Garbage-Less Lunches: We encourage participants to try to bring a garbage-less lunch.
- Drinking Water and no other liquids like milk, juice, etc.
- Cooking/Nature tasting at Nature School: 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.

Dealing with Allergies:

Allergy-prone children at Fern Flower - Nature School must be informed of their allergies at enrollment, documented on enrollment forms, and promptly reported to the school.

Special Events like Birthdays and Holidays:

Parents and teachers are welcome to bring special treats to Fern Flower - Nature School events, and any allergies in the classroom will be listed.

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 fernflownatureschool@gmail.com or call/text **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 hosts one parent meeting per year, aimed at making them accessible. These meetings discuss upcoming events, review the parent handbook, and allow parents to voice their concerns. While not mandatory, parents' input helps the school identify needs and preferences.

Complaint Policy and Procedures:

Fern Flower - Nature School encourages open communication with parents and families regarding concerns, issues, or complaints. Parents can arrange private meetings with the Director or Manager to address cleanliness, policies, food policy, hours of operation, program objectives, communication, fee payment, and more. Complaints can be done verbally or by email.



Fern Flower - Nature School
Location: 3827 Charlton Dr, Qualicum Beach, BC V9K1Z3
Phone Number: 250-299-2054
E-mail: fernfloweratureschool@gmail.com

Emergency Communication:

Fern Flower - Nature School will notify parents, guardians, and classroom teachers of emergencies, including weather-related cancellations or early closures, via phone and email, if necessary, and FFNS teachers if travel conditions are hazardous.

Fundraising and Extra Events

Fern Flower - Nature School hosts various fundraisers, including recycling, an annual bake sale, a children's art show, and a book sale. Parents can drop off bottles at the school, and proceeds go back into the classrooms. The school also hosts an annual book sale, where parents and staff can purchase books. Other fundraisers include lemonade stands, parent's night out, and plant sales. Fundraising is crucial for the school as it allows for extra events like family suppers, Santa visits, and holiday parties, while also covering renovations and upkeeps.

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 assessment tool is used at Fern Flower - Nature School to track individual child development. Teachers continuously monitor and document each child's progress, allowing for tailored activities. Parents-teacher conferences are held annually with the Lead Teacher. Permanent assessment portfolios are kept for each child, with permission from parents. These portfolios contain various items and should be returned promptly.

Guidance Strategies

Adults have a responsibility to guide, correct, and socialize children towards appropriate behaviors, known as child guidance and discipline. Positive guidance promotes self-control, responsibility, and thoughtful choices. Effective caregivers save time and effort in correcting misbehavior. Acknowledging the child's progress and efforts is crucial for healthy development. Teaching self-discipline requires patience, thoughtful attention, cooperation, and understanding. Fern Flower - Nature School uses positive guidance techniques.

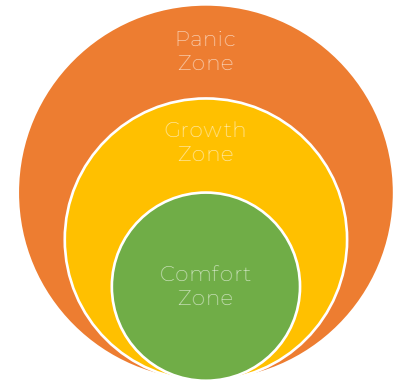
When interacting with young children, staff will ask themselves the following questions:

“ 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

Fern Flower - Nature School promotes Challenge by Choice, empowering students to choose their participation in activities. They encourage personal engagement and meaningful contributions to group efforts. The school creates a challenge-by-choice environment, allowing students to move into their growth zone without stepping into their panic zone. Regular small steps into the growth zone are encouraged for optimal development and learning.



Biting Policy

Biting, a common behavior in children aged one to three, is unacceptable in childcare settings. Reasons include teething, sensory exploration, imitation, crowding, attention seeking, frustration, and stress. Fern Flower - Nature School implements strategies 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:

Weather-related cancellations of programs will be communicated via shared teacher, website, email, and telephone at least an hour before the scheduled start time. Parents/guardians will be contacted via telephone, emergency contact people will be called, and staff will remain with children until picked up. Closure updates will follow School District #69 and Bowser Elementary School.

*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

Fern Flower - Nature School educators and volunteers regularly consult forecasts and prioritize weather-related safety. They ensure participants are close to shelter during predicted storms or high winds, limit exposure to extreme cold or heat, and constantly assess comfort and safety, monitoring for signs of frostbite, hypothermia, and heat exhaustion.

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

Nature School emphasizes the importance of risk management in healthy child development. Fern Flower educators and volunteers co-assess and manage risk with participants, including students, teachers, and volunteers. They conduct seasonal site, activity, and individual risk assessments, considering the balance between risks and benefits. Risks include injuries from strenuous activities, improper tool use, matches or fire, poison ivy, wild animals, ticks, and 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:

Educators should discourage children from pet animals, asking the owner first and being mindful of crowds. Monitor animal-child interaction and inform others of potential dangers. If encountering an unfamiliar or aggressive domestic animal, perform wildlife safety. Parents are welcome to bring their pets 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.

Parent Handbook

Thank you for reading this Parent Handbook Pocket Guide. If you are looking for more information, please read our full Parent Handbook posted on our website at fernfloweratureschool.net.