

Forest Preschool Parent Handbook 2020-21

* Updated January 29, 2020 *



“Education begins the moment we see children as innately wise and capable beings. Only then can we play along in their world.”

– Vince Gowman

Welcome! We're excited that you and your child are joining the Forest Preschool community at North Branch Nature Center! Please read this handbook as you enroll your child, and keep it handy to refer back to for logistical considerations. If you have any questions about the program after reading this handbook, please contact Forest Preschool Director Mary Zentara.

Table of Contents

Organizational Information

1. NBNC's Mission & Vision	3
2. Forest Preschool History & Teaching Staff	3
3. Forest Preschool Philosophy	5
4. Child Safety in the Field	6
5. Forest Preschool Curriculum	6
6. Daily Rhythm, Activities & Benefits	7
7. School-Family Relationship (communication & family involvement)	9
8. Guidance & Behavior Policy	10

Enrollment and Financial Information

1. Enrollment Checklist	11
2. Financial Information (tuition, deposits, payments, fees, Act 166).....	11

Logistical Information

1. Calendar	14
2. Weather Cancellation Policy	15
3. Attendance	15
4. Health & Safety (child sickness, hands & potty, ticks, water & food)	15
5. Drop-off & Pick-up	17
6. Adjustment to FPS/First Day Suggestions	17
7. Gear List (clothing, other gear, daily checklist, special mud note).....	18
8. Rest Time	19

Resources, Acknowledgements, Gratitude

Contact Information.....

21

Organizational Information

Our Mission & Vision

Founded in 1996, North Branch Nature Center's mission is to connect people of all ages with the natural world.

Our 28-acre preserve offers trails and wild places to explore, connections to other public lands and trail systems, and a quiet place to walk or ski, swim or run, or be still beside the river. At North Branch Nature Center (NBNC), we seek to foster a sense of wonder and curiosity about the natural world and share exquisite educational experiences with learners of all ages.

From monarch-tagging, bird-banding, summer camps and after-school programs to our Naturalist Journeys lecture series, BirdFest and CaterpillarFest, NBNC programs help put people in touch with the sights, sounds and sensations of the wild within our capital. We also lead outings around Vermont, New England and beyond. Visit NorthBranchNatureCenter.org or follow us on Facebook to learn about our other programs for children, teens and adults.

NBNC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, marital status, citizenship, or national origin in its admission policy or conduct of its educational programs.

Forest Preschool History & Teaching Staff

The cornerstone of NBNC's early childhood education programs, Forest Preschool (FPS) was developed in 2011 by Amy Butler, NBNC's Director of Education. FPS was the first forest preschool in Vermont and the state's first full-time nature center-embedded preschool.

FPS was expanded by FPS teacher Mary Zentara and other NBNC staff into a full-time, licensed, 3+ STAR-rated, VT Pre-qualified Early Childhood Program. FPS completed its first year as a full-time, licensed preschool in 2018.

Leslie Hill, Forest Preschool Teacher

[Contact Leslie](#)

Leslie is the oldest of 4 children born in Stony Creek Connecticut, a shoreline town north of New Haven. She raised her four children in a log cabin in the Mad River Valley of Vermont. Leslie graduated from Norwich University in 2002 with a double major in literature and developmental psychology, and an early educator's teaching license.

Leslie has experience with both the Montessori and Reggio Emilia teaching methods, and brings to NBNC more than 25 years of teaching children ages 0-9. She has worked in a variety of places

including as a preschool teacher for the Rumney School, a Life is Good Playmaker for the Kids Foundation in Boston, and as a Health and Wellness Life Coach trained by The Institute for Integrative Nutrition in NYC.

Practices of honoring the earth are an important focus for Leslie. She enjoys a daily yoga and meditation practice, outdoor exercise activities, reading, cooking, music, and dinners with friends and family.

Jenna Plouffe, Forest Preschool Teacher

[**Contact Jenna**](#)

Jenna spent her childhood exploring the woods and waters of Massachusetts, building homes for animals, making "potions," and exploring the tiny worlds often overlooked by adults. She has never really outgrown these things. Jenna is passionate about getting children outdoors, and loves sharing her curiosity and wonder about the natural world with children.

Jenna has a Master's degree in elementary education and spent 12 years teaching in Vermont's public school system. She completed the Educating Children Outdoors (ECO) Institute here at NBNC and spent several summers teaching at Audubon camps in both Massachusetts and Vermont. When Jenna is not at Forest Preschool she can be found exploring the woods of the Mad River Valley with her children and husband.

Mary Zentara, Teacher and Director of Forest Preschool

[**Contact Mary**](#)

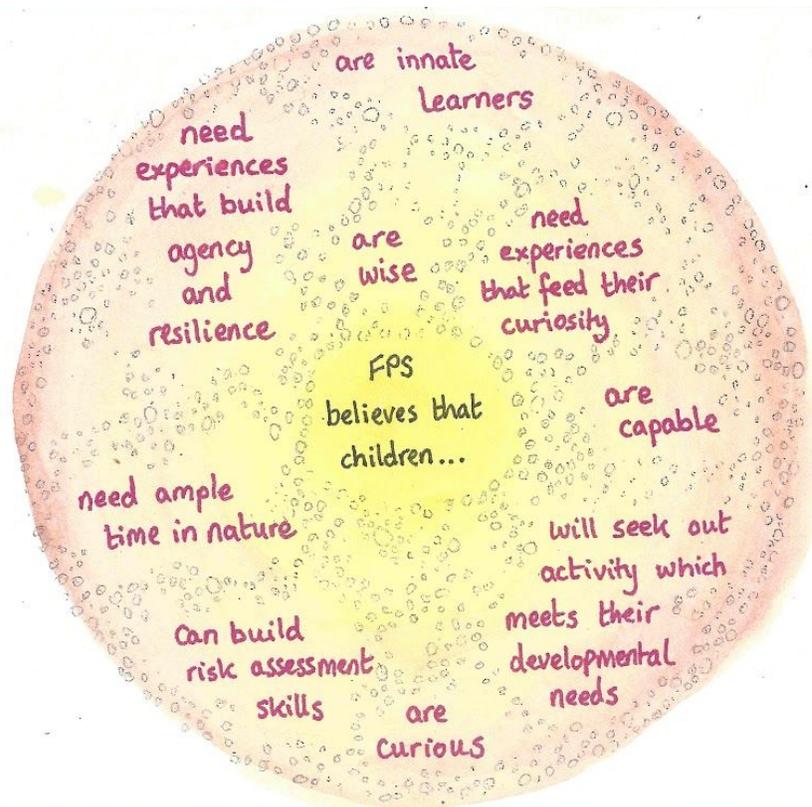
As a kid, Mary perched in hemlock trees and consistently arrived home in wet, muddy sneakers. These formative adventures seeded her drive to share the nourishment of nature with children. Mary holds a B.A. in Communications with a minor in Visual Arts from the University of Connecticut and earned Masters credits in Education and Psychology from Antioch University. She also completed the EarthWalk Mentor Apprenticeship, Jon Young's Art of Mentoring Training, is a graduate of the Outdoor Leadership Program, and holds a VT Early Learning Level 111A Certificate. Mary started her work at NBNC in 2013 as the lead Forest Preschool teacher and later, utilizing her blend of academic and life experience, developed FPS into a full-time, licensed preschool. She is inspired by and grounded in the weave of nature immersion, mindfulness, daily gratitude, child development, and child-led learning. Mary lives with her family in Montpelier.

FPS Philosophy

Forest Preschool's philosophy:

To Thrive at School Children Need:

- To feel Safe
- Love
- Nature
- To learn at their own pace
- To be heard and understood
- Grounded and present teachers
- A degree of healthy risk
- Boundaries
- To move their bodies



Illustrations by Harriet Hart

Child Safety in the Field

Child safety is at the forefront of all we do at Forest Preschool. FPS teachers embed safety protocol and best practices into our school's daily rhythm so that children learn the language necessary to support and facilitate their own safe behavior.

As Forest Preschoolers, children will learn to:

- Communicate clearly with teachers around play and exploration.
- Calculate healthy risks.
- Assess their own abilities and learn to take responsibility for their own safety.

Please refer to the Safety for Outdoor Learning packet for our detailed FPS Emergency Protocols as well as our protocols on fire, saw, and peeler safety.

Forest Preschool Curriculum

At FPS, we empower children to be active in their own learning process by encouraging and supporting their innate curiosity. Our curriculum emerges as we pay careful attention to our students' interests within the context of the changing seasons.

We use a balance of provocations, child-led, open-ended programming, free play, and sensory exploration in natural environments to support the development of the whole child and inspire relevant and meaningful learning. We use the nature playscape, meadows, and forest as our classroom.

Each day includes **“loose parts play”** in the nature playscape. This is a time to explore nature-inspired art projects, seasonal and open-ended materials that may be manipulated in multiple ways.

Songs, storytelling, fingerplays, books and imaginative play come together to promote foundational **literacy development**. Our provocations often invite students to experiment with **early math concepts** including measuring, counting, comparing, and sorting.

We provide opportunities for children to learn how to safely use **real tools** including hammers, whittling peelers, and saws. Using real tools promotes fine motor skill development, a sense of agency, and a positive self-concept.

Because learning and risk-taking often go hand in hand, we also support children's exploration of **healthy risk-taking**. This may take the form of climbing a rock or small tree, balancing on a

log, etc. In taking healthy risks, children develop confidence and the ability to assess and calculate risk for themselves.

FPS is emphatically committed to weaving **equity and social justice learning** into our curriculum. FPS staff use books, open and honest conversation, images, provocations, classroom guests, and family members to build a strong foundation of learning around social justice and equity. We highly value family input, involvement, and support of this ever-evolving aspect of our curriculum. As a staff, we are committed to ongoing learning, stretching, and growing in this area in an effort to provide informed, thoughtful guidance for your children.

We are a secular program.

Daily Rhythm, Activities & Benefits



The rhythm of a sample Forest Preschool day

Forest Kindergartens (ages 3.5–5) have been well established in Germany since 1993. Numerous studies abroad were conducted to determine how students benefit from such programs. We invite you to explore the [Forest Kindergarten Wikipedia page](#) for more information and research statistics.

Below you will find a chart (adapted from the one found at the above-linked Wikipedia page) detailing the developmental benefits of many Forest Preschool activities.

Activity	Developmental Benefit
Spending time outdoors for an extended period in rain, sun, or snow	Development of self-care skills, resilience, and confidence
Playing imaginative games using whatever natural resources and ideas that come to mind	This helps the child explore their own thoughts, develop their imagination and problem solving skills
Role play	Shared imagination, drama, teamwork, recollection of models of behavior, empathy
Building shelters or other structures from branches, with the help of other children or adults	This requires goal definition, planning, engineering, teamwork, and perseverance
Counting objects or looking for mathematical patterns	Mathematics, visual recognition
Sorting items using naturally available objects	Early mathematics skills, naming objects
Listening to stories; singing songs and rhymes	Literacy, art, drama, concentration
Arranging items to make a picture, or build a toy	Spatial awareness, art, problem solving
Writing letters, names in the dirt or snow	Literacy, fine motor skill development
Climbing trees, rocks, steep hills and exploring the forest and fields	Improves strength, balance, physical awareness, risk assessment, positive self-image
Real tool use	Builds confidence, tunes fine motor skills, and develops important life connections
Playing hide-and-seek (camouflage) with others	Develops children's theory of mind by rewarding accurate anticipation of the thoughts and actions of others
Walking to the forest from the building	Improves strength and stamina, develops sensory awareness
Exploring or reflecting alone	Self-awareness, character development, connection to place
Putting on and taking off clothing layers, wearing a backpack, repacking after snack	Dexterity, self-care, spatial awareness, independence, and confidence

School-Family Relationship

Family Involvement

FPS is committed to cultivating positive, collaborative relationships with families. FPS views you the parents as experts in the field of your child(ren). When FPS teachers and parents work together as partners, we can provide the best educational experience for your child. We invite family involvement in several forms including:

- Exchange of ideas.
- Sharing a skill or a particular topic of interest (craft, story, song, special food, cultural background share, etc.).
- Curriculum support.
- Parent-teacher conferences.
- Welcome potluck.
- Holiday and special celebrations.
- Special school-day events.
- Parent Teacher Forest Committee.
- Special NBNC events.
- Parent Night.
- End-of-the-year celebration.
- Parent/family feedback and ideas for involvement.



Parent/Family Communication

FPS invites and offers communication in the following ways:

- Our registration form.
- Information board at drop-off/pick-up location.
- Daily verbal communication with parents.
- Regular email communication with parents.
- Monthly newsletters.
- Parent-teacher conferences held twice each year.
- Parent Teacher Forest Committee.

Email is FPS's main method of communicating pertinent information with the entire parent community. Please let us know if you do not use email on a regular basis.



Communicating Personal and Health Information

It is important for FPS teachers to know personal information — such as a child staying up very late the night before, having a runny nose, etc. This is best communicated to us at the start of the morning either verbally at drop-off or by email to Preschool@NorthBranchNatureCenter.org.

If a major event occurs in your child’s life (such as news of a divorce, moving to a new home, death in the family, etc.), please try to alert us by the day before your child’s next school-day.

To communicate that your child will be staying home on any day for which they are enrolled (see sick-child policy on p. 15), please email Preschool@NorthBranchNatureCenter.org by 8:00 a.m.

Guidance Around Social/Emotional Learning

Guidance at FPS is positive, supportive, caring, and empowering. Clear and consistent expectations around caring for ourselves, others, and the world around us guide students’ behavior, learning, and development. We utilize mindfulness, building awareness of self and other, mindful communication, teacher modeling, and careful observation of students to support learning and practice of social/emotional skills. Positive reinforcement, validating feelings, connecting positive actions with positive feelings, and redirection are techniques that also serve to guide social/emotional learning and growth.

We support children in the practice of safely solving their own problems. This allows children to develop language, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills. When children need assistance around conflict resolution with peers, we support them by using caring “I” statement-oriented communication, providing opportunities to express ideas and feelings.

Behavior Policy

FPS is committed to supporting positive growth and development of all children. We actively partner with parents and children to address behavioral challenges by engaging in conversation and collaborative problem solving. Please be aware:

- Unprovoked hurting of another child and/or using objects as weapons to injure staff or children leads to a call to the parent(s).
- Serious injury of a child or staff member will require a conversation between parents and FPS/NBNC staff to determine what is best for the child and school community.

If dis-regulated and/or unsafe behavior is present and persistent, we will invite parents and teachers to:

- Collaboratively develop a plan of action.
- Attend a parent/teacher conference.
- Work with outside services to support your child.

If behaviors persist beyond the implemented plan and compromise the safety of the group, NBNC may consider the possible expulsion of the child from the program. In this case, a 5 day written notice will be provided to the family.

Enrollment & Financial Information

Enrollment Checklist

Before leaving your child with us, we must have the following, completed and signed:

- Enrollment form
- Deposit
- Immunization/exemption forms
- Identification & Emergency/medical form
- Tool permission slip

Financial Information

Tuition

Forest Preschool tuition for 2020-21 is as follows:

- 2 days/week: \$481/month
- 2.5 days/week: \$619/month
- 3 days/week: \$704/month
- 4 days/week: \$915/month
- 4.5 days/week: \$1038/month

June's tuition is half of the monthly rate since the last day of school is in the middle of June. Tuition has been calculated to include snow days, holidays, etc. No refunds are available for student absences, holidays, snow days, months with fewer school days, etc.



Program Deposit

A \$350 deposit is required to secure your child's spot in the program. Once we receive your registration and deposit, our Registration Coordinator Emily Sloan will confirm with you that

your child is officially registered. Contact Emily at Emily@NorthBranchNatureCenter.org or (802) 229-6206 ext. 100.

The deposit will be applied towards the first month's tuition. If the monthly tuition is less than \$350, the deposit will be applied towards the second month as well. **The deposit is nonrefundable after March 1st.** *After FPS has begun, the initial deposit and first month's tuition payment is not refundable.*

Payment Due Dates & Payment Methods

Payments by check are due the first of the month.

Families enrolled in our ACH payment program will have tuition automatically withdrawn from your bank account each month on the 8th of the month (or on the closest business day when the 8th falls on a weekend or holiday). To enroll in ACH, contact Emily at Emily@NorthBranchNatureCenter.org or by phone at (802) 229-6206 ext. 100.

For payments made by credit card, NBNC will charge a 3.5% surcharge to cover the cost of credit card processing. Credit card payments are also due on the first of the month. To pay by credit card, contact Emily Sloan as above.

Late Payments

Payments are due on the first of the month. Payments received after the 5th of the month will have a \$25 late fee added to them. If a monthly payment is not received by the beginning of the third week of any month, your child will not be able to attend until the payment is received.

Withdrawal

If a need to withdraw your child from the program arises, FPS will do our best to promptly fill your child's space from our waitlist, and provide a partial refund if possible. *However, you may be held responsible for tuition for up to two full months following the withdrawal date, or until we can fill your child's space (whichever comes first).*

Late Pick-up Fee

If you arrive late to pick up your child from Forest Preschool, we reserve the right to request a late pickup fee of \$5 for every 10 minutes after the designated pick-up time. If you believe you will be late picking up your child, please notify us by phone, in advance, at 802-229-6206 ext. 100.

Act 166

Act 166 will reimburse families for up to \$3,445 for the 2020-2021 school year. Families enrolled in Act 166 will receive a \$362 credit each month on their NBNC tuition bill. Since Act 166 reimburses on a weekly basis and tuition is on a monthly basis, if a family leaves mid-year, we will adjust the reimbursement to what NBNC actually received during that time period.

To participate in Act 166, all families must register with their local school district, even returning families. If a family moves mid-year, it is the family's responsibility to both notify NBNC of their new address and effective date of the move, and to enroll in the new school district.

If your child is enrolled in a pre-K program through Act 166, your subsidy is dependent on your child's attendance in the program. Forest Preschool has a contractual agreement with the school districts for the purpose of providing high quality developmentally appropriate early education services to pre-Kindergarten-aged children. **Under this contract, we are required to report daily attendance records to the school districts and notify them if your child has been absent for an average of one pre-K day/week over the course of a month and communicate to you in writing that you risk the loss of pre-K funding, and where necessary, develop a plan for attendance and tuition payment. If your child is absent for more than 2 consecutive weeks, over the course of the school year, we are required to notify you in writing that you will not be eligible for pre-K funding for subsequent absences.**

If your Act 166 subsidy is lost due to low attendance, you will be responsible for full tuition due to NBNC.

Further Act 166 requirements you should understand include:

- Age limitations and eligibility for Act 166: Children must be 3, 4, or 5 years old by the school district's kindergarten cut-off age date (for example, Sept 1st), and must not be age-eligible or enrolled in kindergarten.
- Ineligibility of Act 166 tuition funds when a child is simultaneously enrolled in a public pre-K program and a community-based pre-K program.
- The need to direct Act 166 tuition funds if a child is enrolled in two prequalified programs simultaneously.
- The requirement of completed school registration at the start of the school year, which includes the Tuition Request/Intent to Enroll Form, in order to be eligible to receive the full tuition amount.

If you have further questions regarding Act 166, NBNC can direct you to the contact person in your school district to answer questions.



Logistical Information

Calendar

Forest Preschool runs from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 pm (Mondays through Thursdays) and from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 pm (Fridays). Aftercare runs Monday through Thursday from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Although there are similarities, our calendar does not exactly follow the Montpelier Roxbury Public School calendar. A 2020-21 calendar will be emailed to you upon completion.

Weather/Cancellations

In the case of extreme weather, we may need to cancel Forest Preschool. **If local area public schools announce cancellation for the day, to ensure safety for all, we will follow their lead and do the same.** We will notify you by email. FPS does not make up days canceled due to extreme weather.

Attendance

If your child will be absent from school for any reason, please email Preschool@NorthBranchNatureCenter.org by 8:00 a.m. If you are not able to do so by that time, please also call NBNC at (802) 229-6206, ext. 103.

Please communicate with us by email about any upcoming long-term absences.

Health & Safety

Child Sickness

Parents will be asked to pick up their children from Forest Preschool or keep them home under any of the following conditions:

- Temperature over 100° F (must be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Pink-eye

If your child is not able to participate in the rhythm of the day (see page 7), please keep them at home. **If you plan to keep your child home, please contact us as detailed above.**

If children become ill while in our care and need to be sent home, we will attempt to call parents/guardians first, followed by emergency contacts.

Please note: Any outbreak of communicable disease will be communicated to all parents.

Handwashing & Bathroom Procedures

We start all our days outside, so please have your child use the bathroom and wash hands before dropping them off to us. Please assist your children with washing their hands upon arrival.

Ticks

Ticks are a part of the Vermont landscape and the deer tick population is growing in this area. Ticks can be picked up anywhere there is vegetation when the temperature is above freezing. They can also be brought inside by pets and items that have been on the ground outdoors. Winter cold and snow do not kill deer ticks unless the cold is severe for extended periods of time.

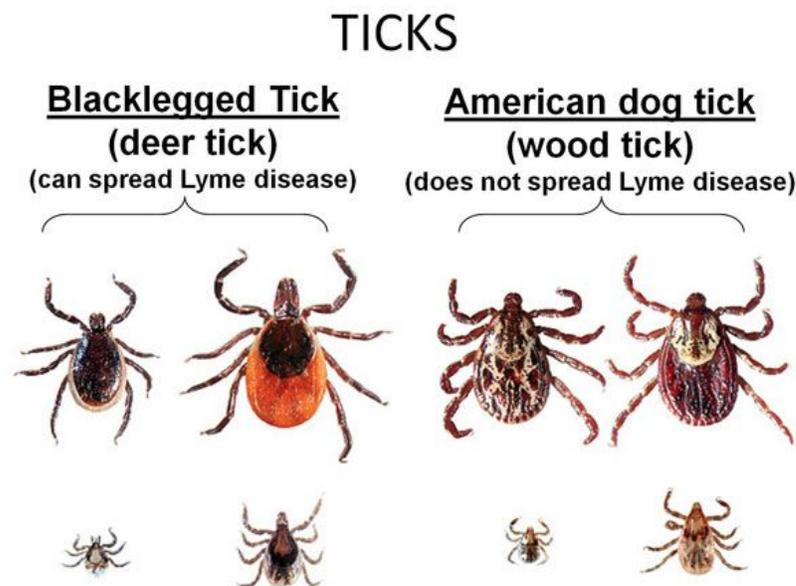
Although ticks are unpleasant and deer ticks carry disease, we don't recommend reducing time spent in nature! We do recommend using Green Mountain Tick Repellent and choosing a regular time of day (bedtime works well) and scanning your child's unclothed body for ticks. **When performing a tick check, don't forget to look in between the toes, behind the knees, the neck under the hairline, in the scalp, in and behind the ears, under armpits, and in the groin area.**

When the temperature is above freezing:

We ask that you dress your children in light colored clothing whenever possible, and always tuck pants into socks and shirts into pants. This helps us see ticks easily and keep them from accessing the children's skin while at school. If it's a hot day, **please dress your child as described above or, if skin on feet and legs is exposed, please apply tick repellent.**

Also, here is a link to the CDC website for natural tick repellent for body and yard:

<https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/prev/natural-repellents.html>



Water

Each child should have a water bottle that will not drip when on its side. Only pack water in the water bottle; avoid juice.

Packing warm tea or milk in a thermos during the colder months, in addition to water, is a great way to keep your child warm and hydrated.

Healthy Food

We make time to eat at mid-morning and mid-afternoon, in addition to lunch at noon. We encourage you to pack warm food or soup in a thermos during the colder months, and healthy protein-filled snacks year round. Please don't pack food in glass jars, and please try to send zero-waste snacks. Any waste coming to school will go home with your child.

Potty Training

We require children to be potty-trained and comfortable using the toilet away from home. FPS teachers will assist your child with gentle reminders, routines, and expectations. Anytime a student is in the field or woods and needs to poop, a teacher will escort the child to the composting toilet or to the Swallow's Nest so a toilet may be used.

During the warmer months, students will take a "forest pee" outside. **If your child is not familiar or comfortable with urinating outside, please practice at home before school starts!**

Drop-off & Pick-up Procedures

Punctual drop-offs and pick-ups enable smooth transitions for your child.

Always sign your child in and out each day, and please remind any authorized extended family members and friends to sign your child in and out as well.

Drop-off

Drop-off is always at 8:30 a.m. Please follow this process upon arrival:

1. Use the bathroom and wash hands.
2. Put any extra clothes inside child's backpack.
3. Ask your child to hang up their backpack.
4. Sign child in on the sign-in sheet.
5. Deliver your child to a teacher.

Pick-up

Pick-up is at 3:30 p.m. on Mondays – Thursdays; 12:30 p.m. on Fridays. **Aftercare pick-up is anytime between 4:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday.**

Please pick up your child **inside the nature playscape by entering the side gate**, adjacent to the deck (labeled afternoon pickup).

Please pick up your child promptly. Sometimes late pick-ups are unavoidable – life happens. **However, please keep in mind that late pick-ups can be stressful for children.** Please email Preschool@NorthBranchNatureCenter.org if you are going to be late.

Pick-up Authorization

Children can only go home with people who are listed on the “Identification and Emergency Information” form, or with someone specified by a parent in writing. If you need to add someone to the pick-up authorization list, please amend it in writing.

Your Child’s First Day

Adjustment to Forest Preschool

Starting preschool is a significant step in the life of your child. Anticipating the start of school can evoke feelings of excitement as well as nervousness and anxiety for both children and parents. FPS’s skilled, caring teaching team recognizes this and will support your child’s unique acclimation process and needs.

To help ease the transition and adjustment, we suggest the following:

- Share with your child the rhythm of the FPS day so they know what to expect.
- Familiarize your child with all items that will go into their backpack on a daily basis.
- Show your child how to open and close food containers, lunch box/bag, and backpack and then practice several times.
- Practice taking a “forest pee” (peeing in nature).
- Develop a plan or ritual for saying goodbye and practice it at home. The plan might include walking your child into the playscape to greet the teachers, giving a hug and a kiss, a silly handshake, singing a song, etc. and then exiting the playscape.
- Attend the Welcome Potluck at the end of August. During the gathering, we will move through a condensed rhythm of the day, including a visit to Deer Camp.
- Share with your child that you will be excited to pick them up and hear about their day.

If you anticipate that your child will be reluctant at drop-off, we strongly suggest you devise a plan that includes a clear timeline around when you will exit the playscape. **We consistently observe successful movement through drop-off reluctance when parents promptly exit the playscape upon completion of the drop-off plan.** This builds resilience and signals to your child that you trust they will get their needs met and be safe in the care of skilled, experienced, and loving teachers.

If you know your child will likely need some extra care around saying goodbye to you, please let us know ahead of time what your drop-off plan is so that we can support you and your child.

For more information around adjustment to preschool, we suggest the article “11 Ways to Help Children Say Goodbye” by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, which can be found at naeyc.org/our-work/families/help-children-say-goodbye.

Gear List

Clothing

To ensure a positive experience for everyone at FPS, all children are required to wear the proper clothing. If your child is warm, they will be happy and able to participate. If you need help with some of these, please ask us; we have a lending program or can help you locate items.

The following items of clothing are necessary for your child to have:

- Rain pants
- Hooded rain jacket
- Long-underwear bottoms and top (polypropylene, capilene, fleece, or wool)
- Wool sweater or fleece top
- Insulated snow pants (with bibs and snow-skirts around the ankles)
- Snow jacket (insulated and water resistant)
- Socks (wool or fleece — no cotton, please)
- Boots (rain boots for the wet seasons/ insulated boots for snow season) *
- Hat (wool or fleece)
- 2 pairs of mittens (waterproof or water resistant)
- Neck warmer

A Special Note on Getting Dirty

We will often send your children home wet and muddy! Please use old clothes and let your child know that at Forest Preschool they CAN GET DIRTY and you don't mind! Packing plastic bags for bringing home muddy clothes is helpful. A tarp or old sheet for your vehicle is also a good idea. **Please keep a full change of clothes in your child's daypack in a zip-locked bag.**

* Note about winter boots: We suggest getting a pair that is one size larger than your child's foot; this will create "dead-air space" to insulate the feet. We don't recommend "Bogs" for winter use due to their poor insulating qualities.

Daily Gear Checklist

- Clothing, outerwear, and footwear
- Extra clothing packed in a plastic bag inside backpack
- Water bottle
- Lunch and snacks (no food packed in glass jars)
- Rest Time gear (blanket, pillow, comfort item)

Rest Time

FPS will supply a rest mat for each child. Parents are responsible for a blanket, pillow, and comfort item. **All bedding must be washed weekly and returned on the first day of the week.** Rest Time will occur either at the Swallow's Nest or out at Deer Camp depending upon the weather.



Resources, Acknowledgements & Gratitude

Resources

VT CDD Child Care Consumer Line:

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/childcare/parents/consumer-line>

Call 1-800-649-2642 toll free in Vermont or email ahs.dcfeddchildcarelicensing@vermont.gov

We recommend the following articles and websites:

1. “11 Ways to Help Children Say Goodbye” by the National Association for the Education of Young Children: naeyc.org/our-work/families/help-children-say-goodbye.
2. [Forest Kindergarten Wikipedia page](#)
3. <https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/prev/natural-repellents.html>

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Jon Young and his teachings in the book “Coyote’s Guide to Connecting with Nature.” Thank you for inspiring, sharing, and teaching us: Amy Butler, EarthWalk Vermont, Antioch University New England, Fiddleheads Forest School, Claire Warden, Jan White, Juliet Robertson, and many more who are dedicated to the practice of children learning and playing outdoors.

Gratitude

Thank you for becoming part of the Forest Preschool community at North Branch Nature Center. We look forward to getting to know you and your children this year!



“We could never have loved the earth so well
if we had no childhood in it.”

– George Eliot

Contact Information

Mary Zentara, Forest Preschool Director & Teacher

(802) 229-6206 ext. 103

Mary@NorthBranchNatureCenter.org

Leslie Hill, Forest Preschool Teacher

(802) 229-6206 ext. 108

leslie@NorthBranchNatureCenter.org

Jenna Plouffe, Forest Preschool Teacher

(802) 229-6206 ext. 108

jenna@NorthBranchNatureCenter.org

Emily Sloan, Registration Coordinator

(802) 229-6206 ext. 100

Emily@NorthBranchNatureCenter.org

Preschool@NorthBranchNatureCenter.org

713 Elm Street, Montpelier VT 05602

NorthBranchNatureCenter.org

