



Fresh Air Learning Parent Handbook

LET NATURE BE YOUR TEACHER
William Wordsworth

Who We Are

We believe in the importance of connecting children to the land. We acknowledge that our programs take place on the unceded lands of thex^wməθk^wəyám (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), and səlilwataʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples.

Fresh Air Learning is a nature-based learning program for children ages 2-13. We connect children to nature through play and hands-on exploration. Our outdoor learning environment allows each child to grow in respect and understanding of nature, other people, and themselves.

Our Values:

- At Fresh Air Learning, we strive to create programs that are inclusive, welcome a diversity of children and families, and respect people and place.
- We commit to decolonization and anti-racist practices and acknowledge that this involves an ongoing process of learning, reflection and growth.
- We believe that children are whole beings who are able to choose their own directions for learning, and we consider ourselves to be collaborators with children in their learning process. We support a range of experiential and play-based learning opportunities.
- We strive to be a welcoming community for families and staff across the spectrum of gender diversity and sexual orientation.

Our Learning Philosophy

Forest School: Ages 2 to 8

Our programs for children ages 2 to 8 are based on the forest school philosophy. Forest school is a learning philosophy that respects children as self-directed learners who have a sense of how they want to grow. Our teachers observe the children and bring in inspiration to extend their learning. The children's learning is also inspired by the places where we play, and the environment is the children's co-teacher as well.

Distributed Learning: Ages 5 to 13

Our elementary programs run in collaboration with Island Discovery Learning Community, which operates through the Powell River School District. It is co-facilitated by school district and Fresh Air Learning teachers, and enrolled children are considered to be distributed learners who learn at home and in the community when they are not in our program.

We offer three elementary school programs. Two run in North Vancouver and the other runs in Vancouver. Our Vancouver Nature Learners program emerged from Windsor House forest school families who were seeking to extend their children's democratic education.

At the elementary level, our program is inspired by many different learning philosophies, including:

Forest School: At forest school, children play and learn in natural places. In these spaces, they learn through imaginative play and exploration. The teacher acts as a facilitator, bringing in resources to help the children deepen their understanding of a topic.

Folk School: Folk school fosters empowerment for community resilience through the teaching and learning of traditional skills, techniques, and crafts.

Coyote Mentoring: We love the questioning techniques, sensory learning, and strong daily and seasonal rhythms of Wilderness Awareness School's "invisible school."

Permaculture Design: Permaculture is a system of ecological design and whole systems thinking that inspires us to become conscious designers of the places and systems in which we live.

Democratic Education: Ensuring that all people, learners and teachers (who are also learners!) have a voice and can work through conflict together.

Our elementary school days involve learning through exploration, hands-on work, tinkering, community service, and interactions with community resource people and field trips. We also strive to connect in a positive way with the places where we learn through restoration and stewardship of our learning spaces.

The Places Where We Learn

Fresh Air Learning's programs for ages 2-8 take place in the forests, farms, and gardens of North Vancouver and Vancouver. Children can choose from a variety of programs and may combine different programs. Our North Vancouver programs take place in the forests of Lynn Canyon Park, Lower Seymour Conservation Reserve, Digger (Interriver) Park, Seymour River Heritage Park and the farm and garden at Maplewood Farm. In Vancouver, we explore the forest, field, beach, and farm environments of Everett Crowley Park, Jericho Beach Park and Southlands Farm. Our programs are inclusive and celebrate all kinds of diverse learners.

Our two North Vancouver Nature School for children ages 5-13 runs in North Vancouver's Lower Seymour Conservation Reserve, Maplewood Farm, Loutet Farm, and numerous other field trip locations around the Metro Vancouver area. This program runs twice a week, on Tuesday and Thursday from 9:30-2:30, and children generally attend for both days. The Vancouver Nature Learners Program for children ages 5-9 runs out of Everett Crowley park in East Vancouver

Our programs run almost exclusively outdoors and use nature as a venue for exploratory play, no matter what the weather might be. We prepare children for these conditions and ensure that the children's safety is our number one priority. Every day, facilitators do a safety check of the site and ensure that the children have all that they need in order to enjoy their time at Fresh Air Learning.

What will your child learn at Fresh Air Learning?

Fresh Air Learning offers children a space to connect to nature and each other and gain confidence to face new challenges. We believe in engaging children's imaginations and using experience as the basis for learning. Simple activities linked with unstructured play and exploration can teach many valuable academic and social skills, like cooperation, communication, and leadership. Our elementary program also explores many hands-on activities connected to curriculum learning outcomes such as science, social studies, art, and storytelling. At forest school, we see that children increase their physical and emotional wellbeing, their sense of belonging, their ability to be creative and explore, and learn about themselves as responsible, ecologically literate citizens. Please visit our website (<https://www.freshairlearning.org/learning-outcomes>) for a more complete look at the learning that happens at forest school.

How We Operate

Fresh Air Learning is a nonprofit registered charity. We are run by a board of community and parent volunteers. Parents are welcome to run for the board at our annual AGM held in November – contact info@freshairlearning.org for more information.

Donations & Fundraising

Fresh Air Learning gratefully accepts financial donations and donations of equipment for the program. Donors are acknowledged on our web site. We are a registered charity. Before donating items for the program, please contact our facilitators. To make a financial donation, visit Canada Helps. Tax receipts are automatically issued once the donation has been made. Donate here: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/7390>

We also hold an online auction of services, experiences, items, and homemade goods every November. Please consider donation to our auction. Contact our program director at tricia@freshairlearning.org to learn more. We acknowledge all donors to our auction in our newsletter!

Fresh Air Learning raises money for new projects by seeking grants. If you would like to help write grants or know of grant funding that we should access, contact tricia@freshairlearning.org.

How Do I Register for Fresh Air Learning?

Visit our website and online store

To learn about our various programs, visit the registration page on our website (<https://www.freshairlearning.org/registration>). Be sure to join our newsletter to learn about our new programs as they evolve.

For our 2-8 year old Forest School programs, simply follow the links to our online registration platform (Amilia) to register in your desired class. If a program is full you can join the waitlist.

For our Distributed Learning elementary school programs, families must arrange to have a phone call about the program and visit prior to formally registering. Please email info@freshairlearning.org for more details about this step.

Here are is the annual timeline for registration:

1. Registration Opens for Current or Alumni Families

Current families, siblings, and alumni have priority registration in February into March. This registration is first come, first served.

2. Registration Opens for New Families

New families have an opportunity to register in the spring after returning families. This process is first come, first served. You must complete all of your child's forms, including program waivers and payment plans in order to be fully registered.

3. Payment & Fees

- Upon registration, families can choose their preferred installment plan of either all at once, by term or month to month. The first month's fees are due upon registration and are non-refundable.
- Each registration now requires a one-time \$35 non-refundable deposit (membership). A portion of membership fees go to our scholarship fund. Learn more [here](#).
- Scholarships are available and families need to apply before registering.
- We require 4 weeks' notice if you decide to withdraw. Payment for these last four weeks is required even if the child will not be attending. Remaining fees will be refunded or cancelled. Class transfers are \$50 per transfer. All fees are non-refundable after March 1st.
- It is possible to pay your fees using homelearning funds, special needs funding, or many other funding sources. Please contact our administrator for details.
- As a nonprofit, Fresh Air Learning relies on those who participate in our programs to cover the expenses of our programs. If you are unable to pay your tuition, contact us immediately to make alternative payment arrangements.
- Payments that are up to 30 days late will be assessed a 10% administration fee. Payments that are more than 30 days late will be assessed a 25% administration fee.
- Transfers are \$50 per transfer
- After a month, if a child has not attended the program and is not paying for the program, we will assume that the spot is vacant and fill it.

4. The Families Section of the Website

After you are registered, our administrator will send you the information required to access the families section of our website. There, you will find a program calendar, contact information for other families in the program, a list of what to wear to the program, and other relevant documents such as our code of conduct.

5. Parent Orientation

For our forest school programs ages 2-8, parents must attend or view our virtual orientation session before the program begins. For our elementary programs this involves a parent meeting before our programs begin.

6. Class Dates

Fresh Air Learning's programs begin the week of September 13th 2021 and run to the week of June 17th 2022. We have a 3-week winter break starting the week of December 13th – December 31st 2021 and a 2-week spring break March 14th – March 25th 2022. Applicable classes do not run on stat holidays.

What is the Teacher's Role at Forest School?

At Fresh Air Learning, the teachers act as facilitators of the children's learning. Their roles are:

- To ensure that all safety measures are in place and are followed.
- To treat each child with respect, care, and dignity.
- To help meet the social, emotional, physical, and mental needs of each child
- To engage in supportive and open communication with children and families.
- To encourage children to explore, create, ask questions, and imagine.
- To document the children's learning and communicate this with the parents
- To bring learning resources and provocations to support the further development of the children.
- To remain open to learning, growing, and sharing with others.
- To be fully present each day.

To learn more about our expectations of children and families in the program and about the ways that we work to guide behaviour, please take a look at our Student Code of Conduct in the Families section of our website.

Parent Volunteers

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer for a class, please contact Katrina: info@freshairlearning.org. All volunteers are required to complete a criminal record check before volunteering.

We welcome families who need to transition their children gently into the program and will encourage parents to stay adjacent to the group as they transition their children. Please review our COVID policies for the latest guidelines on parents transitioning their children into the program.

Program Communication

What can you expect once you sign up for the program? We like parents to know what is happening – here's how we communicate with you.

Ages 2-8

- We send out a monthly newsletter to people interested in our program.
- You can visit our blog to see details of what the children are doing.
- You can follow along with your child's class via a Google photo album.
- We are also happy to have personal conversations with you about your child's development and interactions in the program. If the conversation will be long, please contact the facilitator beforehand so that they have time set aside specifically for you.
- You will have the opportunity to have a phone meeting prior to the program beginning, and we schedule parent-teacher conferences in October. This is a good opportunity to provide feedback and answer any questions you may have regarding your child's integration and wellbeing. This is necessary as pick-up times during the day can be rushed and are not always a good opportunity to hold an in-depth discussion.
- If you are unsure about the upcoming schedule, please log into your Amilia account to view your child's schedule.

Ages 5-13

- We send out a monthly newsletter to people interested in our program.
- Parents in the elementary program will receive weekly updates on program activities in our communal Google Drive document. This allows you to move through the entire school year at a glance.
- You will meet with your school district teacher to review your learning plan before class begins. You will also have parent-teacher conferences at the end of term one and optional conferences in term two.
- If you are unsure about the upcoming schedule, visit the Families section of the website and look at our community calendar.

Questions and Concerns

If you have a question or a concern, please bring it up with the appropriate facilitator, administrator, or board member. Please connect with your facilitator first if you have questions about your child or about how the class is managed. All questions and concerns are confidential.

Fresh Air Learning Policies

Welcoming Policy

We welcome all children and their families, regardless of ancestry, race, language, religion, economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. We work to maintain a physically and emotionally safe environment for all children in our programs.

We provide additional support to families through our scholarship program. If you are a family in need of financial support, please do not hesitate to contact us for our scholarship form. If you are a family who could provide financial support, please consider contributing to our scholarship fund. Even a small monthly donation helps!

We work to make our space accessible and diverse, but we reserve the right to address issues of unsuitability with the parents at any time. We try our best to work with parents to assist a child transitioning into the program, but if necessary, we will discuss alternative options with families.

We strive to support children with additional needs in our outdoor classroom. If your child has physical, social, or emotional differences that may require adaptations or support, please contact us to see how we can work together.

COVID 19 Policies:

Our programs rely on parents, facilitators, and children to work together to keep children physically and emotionally safe. As a parent, you can help by doing a daily health check for your child, preparing your child with the equipment needed for our program, and helping your child understand that we can all work together to help each other stay healthy.

Our programs are not risk-free, but rather they are environments in which parents, facilitators, and children work to create a supportive environment for each other. We are working with our staff to create positive language around our new routines to support children's healthy social-emotional development. This document will be adjusted according to new orders and other communication from Vancouver Public Health, the BC CDC, as well as School District 47. Please check this document before having your child attend and regularly throughout the program.

Ratios for Program

In our forest school programs, adult:child ratios will be a maximum 1:7. In our elementary programs, adult:child ratios will be a maximum of 1:10.

Parent Responsibilities

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children do not come to class if they are sick (even just cold symptoms). If a child becomes ill during the program, parents must be available to pick up their child as soon as possible. Our child health policies are emerging as school district and childcare policies change. We will follow the local school district's guidelines on child health policies, the BC CDC, as well as WCB to inform our program policies. Please check back on this document regularly. More details on the specifics of the daily health check will go out to parents closer to the start of the program.

Children are not able to participate in the program if in the last 48 hrs they can say yes to any of the following points:

- Fever (above 38° for children under 11, above 38.9 for 12 and older), chills, cough or worsening of chronic cough, difficulty breathing, loss of sense of smell or taste, sore throat, loss of appetite, extreme fatigue or tiredness, headache, body aches, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea.
- Have returned from travel outside Canada in the past 14 days.
- They are a confirmed close contact of a person confirmed to have COVID-19.
- They are awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test.

If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, please do not attend class and contact 811 if you have symptoms to determine whether a COVID test is required. If you have symptoms associated with other illnesses such as cold and flu, please do not attend class until symptoms have resolved.

What to do if your child develops symptoms of COVID-19 at home

Here are some simple steps a parent, caregiver or staff can follow if they/their child develops symptoms at home:

1. Use the [self assessment tool](#) to determine if your child should get tested, or phone 811.
2. Do not attend class.
3. Contact your teacher via email or text to notify them your child will not be attending.
4. Monitor other members in household.
5. If a child or staff member is assessed by their family physician or nurse practitioner and it is determined that they do NOT have COVID-19, they may return to child care once symptoms resolve.
6. Participants must be symptom free for 48hrs before attending the program.

Can a student attend the program after a test is negative?

If a child develops symptoms, gets tested and the test is negative, they will still need to wait to attend the program until their symptoms improve. Our policies are a child must be symptom free for 48 hrs before attending.

What if a student or staff member has allergies?

Students and staff who experience seasonal allergies or other COVID-19 like symptoms, which are related to an existing condition can continue to attend school when they are experiencing these symptoms as normal. If they experience any change in symptoms, they should seek advice from a health-care provider.

What if there is a confirmed case in my child's school or program?

If a student or staff is confirmed to have COVID-19, public health will work with school administration to determine what actions should be taken. This will include identifying any potential cases, getting in touch with close contacts, recommending 14-day isolation if necessary, and providing follow-up recommendations if necessary.

Handwashing

Throughout our programs we will have increased handwashing. Parents will be expected to bring their own soapy water for their child and ensure that their child washes or sanitizes their hands for at least 20 seconds upon entry to and exit from the program. Children will be expected to bring hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol to facilitate hand sanitization before and after snack and/or lunch, and as needed throughout the program. The hand sanitizer should be in an easily accessible pouch or clipped to their backpack. Please help your child practice doing this on their own. Children must be willing to wash or sanitize their hands during class.

Optional: children can also have a bottle of soapy water to wash their hands with as well as sanitizer. You will be notified by your teacher if your child is required to have this in the program as well.

Use of Equipment

The vast majority of equipment will not be shared. We will send out a gear list closer to the start of the program. Any equipment that must be shared will be sanitized after use and will not be shared between groups.

Students and the Use of Masks

All individuals wearing or not wearing a mask will be treated with respect in Fresh Air Learning as we strive to create an environment kind, supportive community in these difficult times.

In our programs, children are not required to wear masks to class when outdoors, but they are welcome to wear one if they wish. The BC CDC is currently requiring “All K to 12 staff, students in grades 4 to 12, and visitors are required to wear masks in all indoor areas” ([Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance for K-12 Schools](#)). Additionally, “Mask use for students under 9 years of age should be based on their personal or family/caregivers’ choice.” ([Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance for K-12 Schools](#)).

In the event that a program visits an alternate location with an indoor space (such as in the event of poor air quality or thunderstorms), families will be asked to pack a mask for their child to wear when indoors. Families will be contacted prior to the start of the program to learn if their child(ren) have mask exemptions and/or are unable to wear a mask for any reason. Teachers can then help make accommodations and communicate this to staff at the alternate indoor location.

Families can also choose not to have their child participate on indoor program days due to poor air quality or in the event of a thunderstorm. If this is the case, your child’s teacher will confirm pick-up contact information with you individually, in the event the air quality or storms worsens during the program and an early pick-up is needed.

Adults and the Use of Masks:

All individuals wearing or not wearing a mask will be treated with respect in Fresh Air Learning as we strive to create an environment kind, supportive community in these difficult times.

Masks for all adults are required for drop off and pick up as well as in our parent and tot programs, for adults in a supporting role, for guests or volunteers. If you have mask exemptions and/or are unable to wear a mask for any reason, we ask that you maintain a distance of more than 2 metres from others.

Staff and the Use of Masks:

As before, masks will be used by staff when unable to socially distance with children, such as assisting with lunch, gear or toileting in the forest. Some staff may choose to keep their mask on for the duration of the teaching program and is their personal choice.

Distancing Within the Group

Physical distance between children will be encouraged and supported as much as is practical to do so while running our outdoor programs. Our facilitators will use positive language to create routines that encourage children to have more space around their bodies during the program. Smaller group sizes, and specific activities will also facilitate distancing at this time.

Sign In and Sign Out

Parents will need to complete an online COVID health check prior to their child arriving to class. Parents will assist their child washing hands upon check in. Sign in and sign out will be socially distanced and staggered. We ask that families avoid lingering with the group before and after the program.

Forest School Program Withdrawal Policies

- First month's fees due upon registration. These are non-refundable.
- We require 4 weeks' notice should you decide to withdraw. Remaining fees returned or canceled.
- Families will not be refunded for class days missed due to illness.
- After March, fees are non-refundable.
- Class transfers are \$50.
- Payments up to 30 days late will be assessed at a 10% administration fee.
- Payments more than 30 days late will be assessed at a 25% administration fee.
- Class Cancellations: In the event of class cancellation due to Covid-19 or poor air quality we will reschedule 1 week of classes. Any additional weeks will be refunded.

Elementary Cancellation and Refund Policy:

- First month's fees due upon registration. These are non-refundable.
- We require 4 weeks' notice should you decide to withdraw. Remaining fees returned or canceled.
- Families will not be refunded for class days missed due to illness.
- After March, fees are non-refundable.
- If there is a program waiting list, families who exit the program and would like to re-enter in the future will be placed on the bottom of the waiting list for the program.
- If in-class sessions are suspended due to COVID-19, Island Discovery and Fresh Air Learning teachers will work together to provide an equivalent package of online and offline activities for children and families.

Resources:

Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance for K-12 Schools: http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_public_guidance/Guidance-k-12-schools.pdf

BC Centre for Disease Control: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/about-covid-19/symptoms>

Worksafe BC COVID-19 Information and Resources: <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/covid-19>

*Updated August 2021

Attending the Program

Attendance, Drop Off and Pick Up

Families should allow up to 10 minutes to drop off and pick up their child from the program to allow for ample time for our COVID-19 procedures. Parents must complete their online COVID health form and will assist their child in washing their hands before they enter the circle time.

If your child is going to be absent, please text your facilitator before 9 am. You will be provided with your teacher's program phone number prior to the start of the school year. It is very important that parents are able to drop and pick up their children in a timely fashion. If you know you will be late to drop off or pick up your children please text your facilitator.

Please notify the facilitator or administrator if a different person will be dropping off and picking up your child. If the person who is picking up your child changes, you must phone and speak directly to the facilitator. We cannot release a child to someone who is not on the list of people who can pick up your child from the program.

Changes Due to the Weather

Fresh Air Learning may be closed on occasion due to inclement weather, if we deem that the weather would be a hazard to families traveling to the program or children playing outdoors. Should this be the case, the facilitators will call and email parents. If the local school district has a snow day, Fresh Air Learning will not operate. If there is a high wind warning, Fresh Air Learning will notify parents of a change of location or cancellation. We try to avoid cancelling the program and tend to move to an alternate site instead. Fresh Air Learning is closed during school district winter, spring, and summer breaks.

Safety and Privacy

Privacy

A file will be maintained on each family and will be accessible to the facilitator and the administrator. Any information disclosed will be used in a discretionary manner to assist in the wellbeing and care of that child. The following is a list of forms that will be kept in this file.

Registration and contact information

Consent forms for Fresh Air Learning and the school district (if applicable)

Emergency contact and medical information

Parent volunteer form (if applicable)

Criminal record check (if applicable)

Scholarship form (if applicable)

We will place your email address on the program email list so that you can receive essential updates about changes in location or instructions for class.

Risky Play

Forest school involves risky play: play that pushes the child's physical, mental, and emotional boundaries. This play is initiated by the child and monitored and appropriately supported by the facilitators. For information about many of the activities that we do and how we support children in those activities, please see our Safety Handbook – found in the Families and Handbooks sections of our website.

Child Sickness

Fresh Air Learning is an outdoor program that can be physically challenging at times. Children learn to be resilient and understand that they can thrive in all kinds of weather conditions. However, since the weather and the physical environment can pose extra challenges for children, we ask that parents be particularly mindful of their child's state of health when they bring their child to the program that day.

In addition to our COVID-19 policies and in order to support each child's enjoyment of each learning day and to avoid spreading illness, we ask that you keep your child home if any of the following applies:

Temperature over 101 F or 38 C

Vomiting in the last 24 hours

Diarrhea (3 profuse, watery stools)

Communicable disease including but not limited to: measles, chicken pox, mumps, whooping cough, strep throat, viral pneumonia, head lice. The child in ill health may return to the program with the permission of their health care provider. Please note that any outbreak of communicable disease will be communicated to parents in writing.

A cold or cough accompanied by a lot of difficulty breathing or very low energy.

If your child becomes ill or is injured during the course of a program session or seems to be suffering due to a previous illness or injury, the program facilitators may determine that the child would be happier at home that day. In that case, the facilitators will call you or your emergency contact during the program for an early pick up.

In accordance with our welcoming policy, Fresh Air Learning strives to work with families with children with diverse physical, social, and emotional needs, as long as we can ensure their safety and the safety of others. If your child has an illness, injury or other need that occurs during the program year and may require ongoing physical or emotional support, parents should contact the program facilitators to discuss your child's needs and support strategies for your child. These strategies might include program accommodations, volunteer or parental support, or an aide.

Allergies and Food

Fresh Air Learning strives to be a litter-free program. We encourage parents to pack their child's snack or lunch in litter-free packaging. This helps keep the forest clean and reduces waste.

If your child has a food allergy, you must contact us prior to your first day of class. We will work with you to determine what we need to do to accommodate that allergy. This might involve work to ensure that your child does not contact the allergen or ensuring that children do not bring that allergen to class. Although facilitators carry an EpiPen, children with an anaphylactic allergy are expected to bring their own EpiPen to class, and you must let the facilitators know where this is located. Please note that since we are in a dynamic outdoor environment that is accessed by many different people, we cannot ensure that our environment will be completely allergen-free.

Toileting and Hand Washing

In our programs for children ages 2-8, our facilitators carry hand sanitizer, soap, water, and towels to wash and dry children's hands. There will be a handwashing time prior to snack time. Children in the 5-13-year-old program are expected to bring their own handwashing supplies and access park facilities with their group.

Children are encouraged to use the washroom facilities prior to the beginning of the program. If there is a bathroom emergency when we are out in the park and do not have immediate access to a bathroom, a staff person may bring the child to a place where that child can do a "nature pee" if

the child is comfortable. We will only assist the child with sitting or standing to toilet if the child gives consent. Children in the 2-8 year old program should bring an extra set of underwear and lightweight pants in case of an accident.

First Aid

Our facilitators are trained in Standard First Aid and CPR Level C. One of the facilitators carries the first aid bag that will remain with us at all times. All of our volunteers, including parents, are required to have a criminal record check with a vulnerable sector check.

If your child gets a bump, scratch, or a bruise, we will let you know at the end of the session. In case of a medical emergency that requires more intervention, we will attempt to contact a parent or caregiver. If we cannot contact the parent or caregiver, we will contact someone on your emergency contact list. In case of unexpected early dismissal due to unsafe conditions or illness, we follow the same procedure.

Supporting Diverse Children and Families

Disclosure of Special Needs

At Fresh Air Learning, we strive to be inclusive. Sometimes, we need to provide information to other children, parents, or volunteers about how they can best support your child.

If your child has additional needs for social, emotional, or physical support, our facilitator will work with you to craft a short statement that outlines your child's needs and how best to interact with and support your child. This statement will be communicated verbally to others in the program.

Ongoing discussion with parents is very important to us. Feel free to connect with our facilitator if you have any questions about your child's participation in the program. If our facilitator has questions about your child's behavior and needs for support, he or she will contact you as well.

If we find that an individual child's need for support is greater than the facilitator and the volunteers can provide, we will work with you to look at additional care for your child. Some options may include:

You can hire someone who will support your child every day that he or she attends.

You can attend yourself, or designate a friend or family member to attend.

Any child can have a challenging day. Please talk with the facilitator about any comments you may have about any child's behaviour rather than directing comments to the child or the child's family. The facilitator can then work with a child's parents and program volunteers on ways to best meet the child's needs.

English As a Second Language

If English is a new language for your child, please let us know. We are dedicated to working with families to support all ESL students who want to participate in our program.

We would like to support your child as much as possible. We need to speak with you before your child begins the program so that we can learn how much English your child understands. Parents may need to attend with their child to transition for the first few weeks until the child can communicate important needs such as hunger and the need to use the bathroom.

Dual Language Classes

Depending on available facilitators, some of our Fresh Air Learning classes incorporate learning resources, stories, songs, and rhymes in a diversity of languages in addition to English. These are not immersion programs, but rather a gentle introduction to the diversity of languages spoken by our facilitators and families. If you have stories, songs, and rhymes that you would like to share, you are welcome to connect with our facilitators.

Consent and Play at Fresh Air Learning

At Fresh Air Learning, we believe in helping children learn communication skills that will set them up for safe and authentic interactions in life. We talk a lot about consent. We want to make sure that both children feel good about their social and physical interactions. We will talk with them about this to ensure that both children have given consent to play in this way. If the facilitators notice that one or more children are feeling uncomfortable with certain types of interactions, we will talk with the children about those interactions.

Our Learning Environment

At Fresh Air Learning, we aim to create an environment of respect. This includes respect for people of different cultures, ages, interests and abilities. This also includes respect for all living things. We strive to speak and act kindly toward one another. Please visit the Families section of our website for a more thorough look at our Community Code of Conduct.

Adult: Child Ratio

We aim to keep ratios low to allow for strong connections and communication. In our programs for ages 2-8, we have a maximum of 1:7 adult to child ratio. In our elementary programs, we have a 1:10 adult to child ratio (often less).

Transitions and Separation

We understand that children who are new to the program may need some time to transition into the program. If a child requires a parent to assist them transitioning into the program, we can communicate the different stages a parent can be available at a socially appropriate distance to the group. Please talk with our facilitators about your child's specific needs.

Bringing Siblings

Siblings are unfortunately not able to attend the program due to insurance reasons, to support our COVID-19 policies and to maintain our low ratios. Babies in arms who can stay in a front or backpack are allowed in our parent and tot programs. Babies in arms who can stay in a front or backpack and/or older sibling may join a parent who is supporting their child transitioning into a program at a distance from the group, with approval from the facilitator.

Gentle Discipline and Nonviolent Communication

Discipline methods used by facilitators and volunteers will focus on gentle discipline. Whenever possible, we will try to redirect the children and encourage discussion of any differences so that the children can work on communicating their needs to each other. For more information about how we work with children, please take a look at our Code of Conduct – found in the Families section of our website.

Physical Play

Part of the joy of being outdoors is having the opportunity to engage in physical play. This may include building, sitting, and playing together in imaginary play. We encourage children to engage in pretend play in nature. Sticks can have many different uses, including use as pretend weapons. Our policy is to talk about this play with the children and discuss as a group how we can play in a way so that everyone feels comfortable. As a group, we will establish some rules around weapon, war and superhero play. Once we have discussed these rules we will communicate our discussion with the parents and caregivers so that everyone is well informed. Please see our parent documents in the parent section of our website for more information. If you are curious about the value of this type of play and would like to learn more about our philosophy, you can also contact your program facilitator.

Meals

Please provide your child with a snack, lunch (elementary), water bottle.

Branded Clothing and Toys

Please avoid sending your child in clothing that has characters on it so that the clothing does not influence the children's play. Please avoid bringing toys from home to Fresh Air Learning. We want to make sure that they do not get lost. If your child wants to share a special toy or photo,

please ask the facilitators if you can show it off at circle time. After this, the toys can go home with parents or the facilitator will place them in a backpack for safekeeping and will return them at the end of the session.

What to Bring to Fresh Air Learning

Your children are registered for forest school. What should you get to make sure they are warm and dry?

Children must come with gear that is appropriate for the weather that day. Children who are not adequately dressed will not be able to attend that day. Mountain Equipment Coop has many things you will need. Consignment, thrift stores and Craigslist often have great finds as well. In the past parents have arranged bulk orders with certain local companies as well. You can also join Fresh Air Learning's Facebook Gear Swap:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/156901604517453/>

Sanitization:

- Hand sanitizer containing at least 70% alcohol attached to the outside of the child's backpack, or in an easily accessible pouch for the child to reach.
- Handwashing kit and towels for parents (parents will assist children with washing their hands upon entry/exit of the program) We recommend a water bottle with warm soapy water and a clean dry washcloth.
- If your child is unable to use hand sanitizer for any reason, please pack a handwashing kit for them as described above.

Waterproof Boots:

- Children will wear their rain boots almost all year round.
- If possible, buy new boots. Children use them a lot and the soles wear through.
- The taller the boots, the better! This prevents puddles from getting into the boots.
- Bogs and Kamik both make warm neoprene boots for children.
- Kamik also sells rain boots with liners for extra warmth.
- If you go for normal rain boots, wear wool socks.

When it is rainy, we recommend:

- **Layers:** We recommend wearing layers of clothing so children can make adjustments as needed according to changes in weather/microclimate and activity levels.
- Inner layer of fleece (or polypropylene) or natural fabrics such as wool or silk. The fabric should wick moisture away from the skin and provide a warm, breathable layer.
- Middle layer of insulation made of wool or fleece.
- Avoid jeans in wet weather, since they tend to soak up the water.
- **Rain Jacket:** Outer shell jacket of waterproof, windproof clothing. Be sure to get a jacket in a larger size to allow for layers of clothing under the jacket.
- **Rain Pants:** Pants should stop at the waist so that children can use the "forest toilet" . MEC, Abeko, and Wet Skins all make good rain pants. (Parent tip: to keep gear waterproof, spray it with silicone every 3-4 months).

- **Warm socks:** Wool or other thick socks keep your feet warm. Tuck an extra pair into your backpack.
- **Hat:** Warm, waterproof hat that covers the ears.
- **Gloves:** We like Abeko/Puddlegear gloves. These are waterproof and lined. (If your child is not wearing waterproof gloves, bring an extra pair or two.

When it is cold, please add:

- Warm and waterproof gloves or mittens that slip on and off easily.
- Long underwear, Wool or MEC long underwear keeps children warm with less bulk.
- An extra pair of warm gloves and warm socks in your child's bag.
- Optional: reusable hand warmers.

When it is warm, please wear:

- **A long-sleeved shirt** (we recommend light cotton, silk or hemp).
- Durable pants.
- A sun hat.
- Running or hiking shoes (note that children may still play in water and mud, footwear should be waterproof wherever possible!).
- Sun protection.

Everyone requires:

- **A whistle:** attached to the child's jacket.
- **Backpack:** A child-sized waterproof backpack. The backpack should be small enough for your child to carry comfortably with a good chest strap. (Please put a name tag or some other distinguishing mark on the pack). Popular options are MEC brand for smaller children (ages 2-5) and Deuter for children ages 5 and up.
- **Water bottle:** Water in a spill-proof bottle. Stainless steel Klean Kanteens are very durable.
- **Snack:** A healthy, high-energy snack in a reusable container **that is easy to open for the child independently!** Metal tiffins, lunchbots, and other compartmentalized boxes work well for snacks. For "plastic wrap," we like reusable Abeego Wraps or cloth snack bags.
- **Lunch:** For programs longer than 4 hrs children will need to bring lunch and a snack.
- ***Optional - Mug:** A small unbreakable cup for warm drinks (optional, but teachers will no longer bring tea to share)
- ***Optional - Thermos:** A small kids thermos (stainless steel is best) for hot drinks in the winter months.
- **Tissues:** in a small ziplock bag, easily accessible.
- **An emergency blanket** (such as <https://www.mec.ca/en/product/0199-034/Emergency-Blanket>)
- **Extra socks, gloves, and hat.**
- **Extra layers:** It's good to keep an extra layer or two and a pair of underwear in your child's backpack in case of accidents.
- **3 Bread bags.** Clean, re-used bread bags for your child's backpack. These go over the feet if they get wet, so that children can slip their feet into their boots again. Please place a few bags into your child's backpack.

The child's backpack should have their name on it and the Fresh Air Learning phone number (604-802-7539) on a tag on the outside.

Contacting Us

Admin Phone: 604-802-7539

Program Director

Tricia – tricia@freshailearning.org

Assistant Director

Katrina - info@freshairlearning.org

Thank you for reading the Fresh Air Learning Parent Handbook. If you require any further information regarding our programs, please contact us at info@freshairlearning.org.

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