



THE CHILD'S ELEMENT
-Mindful Forest School-

Parent Handbook



- Every parent is required to read and understand the information within this Parent Handbook. This is critical for your child's success in our program, and understanding the program requirements & operations.

Introduction

Child's Element (outdoor programs for kids) was created and is owned by Sara Wild Jones.

Mindful Forest School will guide your child in developing an emotional intelligence while exploring their wide and vast imagination year round.

From creative expression and meditation, to building forts, nature walks, and playing in the dirt, this program is where your child's imagination will come alive, while continuing to gain the skills essential for life.

Mindful Forest School allows every child to make mistakes, to learn the process of repair, and to try again. This skill set of processing will then be extended to every aspect of a child's life (i.e. family balance, peer relationships, problem solving, academic confidence, and through their own development of self).

Without the use of most modern technology and toys, your child will have the chance to get creative, and to brainstorm with a team of peers to explore their ideas and creativity, with teacher support. Through this supported structured and unstructured time, your child will build confidence and independence.

With themes based on our Earth's elements, your child will learn with the seasons. We share in the joy that can be found every moment of every year.

What makes Mindful Forest School unique from other preschools and learning programs?

The Child's Element has a unique approach to guiding and interacting with children that involves gentleness, and emotional support. All teachers are trained to ensure our gentle approach remains consistent from teacher to teacher.

Our teaching style was specifically developed to support children in their own individuality and self, acquire valuable life skills, and to establish kindergarten readiness for preschoolers. This teaching style allows children to flourish through nature immersion, where we actively promote individual empowerment, group bonding, curiosity, and emotional regulation. We continuously teach respect for all living things and about the impact we have on the Earth. We assist in life skills and strategies, such as problem solving, safety management and appropriate risk assessment. We believe that being in nature results in a higher level of cooperation and teamwork by building positive social skills and peer-to-peer communication.

Our Team

All teachers must have at least a High School Diploma, have experience working with children, and must attend thorough training with the Director.

All teachers are CPR/First Aid certified (Infant, Children, and Adult) and are background checked.

Kindergarten readiness for Preschoolers and valuable life skills gained for all other ages

Our program provides quality opportunities for children to learn problem solving, critical thinking, and divergent learning skills. Our program also fosters a love of learning, creativity, imagination, and a focus on each child's strengths.

True Kindergarten "readiness" has commonly been nourished through play, which is a form of maturity that includes: curiosity, a love of learning and discovery, the ability to follow simple instructions, personal initiative, and development of a sense of self. Through 'shared play', experiences such as taking turns, respecting others' opinions, making up rules (agreements amongst peers), working together toward a shared goal, sharing discoveries, practicing negotiation skills are all fostered. Nature provides a setting with much stimulation and ever-changing diversity to help children acquire these social and emotional abilities. Studies find that children who experience these types of programs continue on into kindergarten with higher emotional resilience, perseverance, a willingness and strong desire to learn. Our outdoor setting aids in children gaining physical resiliency and developing the vestibular sense. We also see lower levels of frustration and a greater capacity for teamwork and cooperation.

Expectations and discipline policy

Children must be 3 years old, potty trained, and able to follow teacher instructions, and safety rules. We expect children in our program to communicate basic needs such as thirst, hunger, bathroom needs, etc.

Discipline policy

At Mindful Forest School, we model and foster gentleness, boundaries, and respect for self and for others at all times. Young children are in the process of learning social and emotional skills. When children have an issue that arises and they cannot resolve it on their own, teachers will lovingly step in to support the children in coming to their own resolutions.

We have a zero tolerance policy for hitting, grabbing, pushing, name calling, kicking, or any other demeaning or unsafe behaviors. Although we find it a rare occasion that a child becomes aggressive or unsafe at Mindful Forest School, in the case a child becomes aggressive, a teacher will calmly and gently help to resolve the issue with all children involved, and if a teacher felt it necessary, will remove the aggressive child from the

situation and will process their feelings, encourage their own ideas on how to resolve and repair, and will offer tips on how to handle a situation differently in the case it comes up again. In the case any unsafe behaviors are repeated, the child's parent will be calmly communicated with, to discuss whether or not their child is ready to attend our program. We have a firm stance on creating a space where all children are safe and have positive experiences.

Teachers encourage children to express their emotions with words, or signs. This is a skill that takes practice-practice-practice, reminders from grown-ups, and support in their emotional regulation. As teachers are always aware of the children, they will offer gentle de-escalating reminders such as, "use your words," "tell him/her how you are feeling," or they will offer input on their observations, such as, "you seem to be feeling frustrated, I can help," or "your face is telling me that you are feeling sad/mad/frustrated, may I come sit by you?"

We empower children in learning how to work with others while simultaneously enhancing their individuality.

If your child ever reports any type of negative experience at Mindful Forest School, we ask that you bring it to the Director's attention immediately, so we can communicate and work as a team to support your child's concerns or feelings.

Toilet Proficiency

All children must be fully potty trained, and have the ability to express when they need to eliminate. Teachers are able to assist with toileting if needed, however, we are unable to change diapers.

Ensuring success

We ensure the success of our program and your child by

1. Carefully monitoring each child's needs: adequate clothing, food, and emotional stability.
2. Having teachers who: embrace learning in nature, foster empathy and kindness, and instill a respect for nature and each other.
3. Honest relationships with parents and our community.
4. Purposeful, ongoing safety assessment and reducing hazards.

Dressing Your Child For Success

Dressing your child appropriately is critical to your child's success in our program.

Colder Months and Snowy days

- Baselayer
Children should wear a base layer of long johns, against the skin. This layer works best when it is fitted, and not tight or constricting where it'll restrict heat circulation. Wool or silk are best. Do not buy cotton long johns as cotton collects too much moisture.
- Mid layer
This layer should be slightly thicker. Wool or fleece are best. Clothing that fits this category: Sweaters, long sleeved shirts, sweat pants, leggings, etc.
- Heavy layer
The heavy layer provides the most warmth during the coldest winter days. This includes a snow jacket and snow pants, or bodysuit.
- Water-proof layer
Rain pants or rain suits are critical in keeping children dry and warm. Even on sunny days children need protection from the wet ground. Outer layers that have Velcro closures at the ankle allow a tight fit over boots will keep moisture and water out. Preferred brands are Oakiwear, Lands End, and Patagonia.
- Winter Accessories
 - **Boots-** Children should be outfitted in boots made of neoprene material to keep water completely out. Boots should fit loosely with a single pair of wool socks.
REQUIRED brands are Bogs or Oakiwear.
 - **Mittens-** The best mittens for long hours of outdoor play are long, waterproof mittens of the "sleeping bag" style, which means they zip up the wrist. Preferred brands are Veyo Mittyz, Head, Burton, or Gordini.
 - **Hats-** Wool or synthetic warm hats will keep little heads warm. Hats with flaps that cover the ears and back of the neck are best. Hats that have a little room on top of the head will do better at insulating heat than hats that fit snugly.
 - Balaclava (headpiece that goes under your hat and provides coverage for neck) HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. These work better than scarves. Scarves can get caught on something while they play or be difficult to keep on.

Please do what is best for your child, however, these are Mindful Forest School's most ideal recommendation:

PLEASE do not put overalls or one-pieces on your child in the middle of all the layers. This makes potty breaks especially difficult.

Please keep one-pieces or overalls the TOP outer layer.

In the case a child needs to wear a coat over top of a one-piece or overalls for additional added warmth, that is fine.

When Fall becomes cold and wet:

Base Layer: liners from Patagonia (top and bottom long sleeved)

Second Layer: fleece pants, and fleece zip-up hoodie (with zipper and hood)

Outer/TOP layer: Oakiwear one-piece RAIN suit. The Velcro cinches at the ankles secure around the BOOT.

Shoes: Bog Boots, or the Oaki equivalent boot.

Socks: 2 LONG pairs of socks, wool. Not Cotton. One thin sock pulled up over the base layer liners, and an additional thick wool sock over the thin sock.

Hat: wool or fleece

Mittens: Start sending your child with their winter mittens whether they want to wear them or not, it's best to have them available (recommendation links below).

When Temperatures drop into winter:

(most things are the same from above, except for the outer layer, balaclava under their hat, and recommended winter mitten links).

Base Layer: liners from Patagonia (top and bottom long sleeved)

Second Layer: fleece pants, and fleece zip-up hoodie (with zipper and hood)

Outer/TOP layer: Oakiwear one-piece snowsuit

Shoes: Bog Boots, or the Oaki equivalent boot.

Socks: One LONG pair of WOOL socks. Not Cotton. (no ankle socks please)

Hat: wool or fleece over top a balaclava

Mittens: mittens that are waterproof and that pull up to the elbow and that cinch tight at wrist and ideally the elbow also.

Recommended Brands:

Oakiwear (rain suit, snow suit, snow boots)

Reima (snow suit, boots, gloves)

Burton (snow pants and jackets, snow gloves)

North Face (rain pants and rain shell)

Bogg Boots (fully waterproof SNOW boot version. can be worn in warm weather, also)

Sorel Boots (fully waterproof version, no fabric at all version)

Dueter (backpack)

REI (backpack)

Osprey (backpack)

Warmer Months and Summer

- Clothing and footwear should be comfortable and non-restricting (CLOSED TOED SHOES REQUIRED)
- Please do not dress children in one piece clothing (other than their outer layer, if chosen)
- A sunhat is required during the summer
- Please apply sunscreen, and bug spray to your child prior to drop-off.

Dirty clothing at Pickup

Expect your child to be dirty, muddy, wet, etc by the end of day at our program.

Parents often bring a clean change of clothes to put on their child at pickup.

Extreme weather closures

Our program emphasizes nature immersion in all weather, except when conditions become unsafe or dangerous. On days when driving, or weather becomes a concern, we will adhere to what is safest for children and families. In the case of late start, or cancellations, parents will be notified by 7:30am.

Due to our program being completely outdoors, there may be days where we visit a library or a different park. Parents will be notified by 7:30am if drop-off location has changed for that particular day.

We understand that class cancellations can be inconvenient for parents and families, however, SAFETY is our number one priority.

Examples of weather that calls for a cancellation of class:

High Winds

Lightning

Blizzard

Heavy Snow on the Roads causing Dangerous Driving Conditions

Severe and Heavy Rainfall

Extremely Low Temperatures

Any time the local School District closes

Any other weather deemed too dangerous to hold class by Administration

Sick Child Policy

Your child should remain at home if they have experienced fever, wet cough, vomiting, or diarrhea in the past 24 hours.

If your child is too sick to attend please message in Brightwheel letting us know of absence.

Emergency Situations

Although it is unlikely, as Administration is constantly observing the weather forecast prior to class, and during class, in the event of sudden extreme weather:

- Teachers will notify parents of the situation immediately, and inform of a required immediate pickup.
- The teachers will bring the students to the pick up location for pickup
- Parents must have the Brightwheel APP on their phone with notifications turned ON to receive messages during class time

The Mindful Forest School Family

It is important that every parent understands how their own attitude will play a part in their children's success at The Child's Element. If your child sees your excitement about forest school, they are more likely to feel excitement for school, versus feeling nervous.

Parents are not required to volunteer, however, we love to have parents sign up for days to visit! We also offer a limited number of parent-teaching opportunities.

Schedule

- Mindful Forest School (Fall, Winter, Spring terms) is held:
 - Mondays- Friday. Drop off is promptly at 8:30a and pick up is at 12:15
 - Our program serves up to 15 children per class during the school year
 - Teacher:Child ratio is 1:5.5 (Two teachers for up to 11 students per group, three teachers between 12-15 students per group)
- Our Summer Program is held:
 - Mondays- Friday. Drop off is promptly at 8:30a and pick up is at 12:15
 - This program serves up to 11 children per group
 - Teacher:Child ratio is 1:5.5 (two teachers per 11 students)

Children enrolled in the school year for Mindful Forest Preschool are not automatically enrolled in the Summer Program. Please notify Administration if you are interested in securing a place for Summer Term

A typical day:

8:30 Drop off / Welcome Circle

8:40 Walk to our spot (It is important that all children start the day together with Hello Circle. Please be prompt with drop off. If a child is late, parents are responsible to walk their child to meet up with us)

9:00 Snack

9:15-10:15 Supervised, teacher supported Free-play

10:15 Snack / Story Time

10:45-12:00 Supervised, teacher supported Free-play

12:00 Goodbye Circle/Express Gratitude

12:15-12:30 Pick up / Sign-out

TYPICAL CALENDAR

Calendar subject to change from year to year, Calendar uploaded in Brightwheel Documents mid-Summer prior to the August start.

First Day
Fourth Monday of August

Last Days:
The Friday before Memorial day weekend

CLOSED on the following days:

-LABOR DAY

-THANKSGIVING RECESS: Closed the week of Thanksgiving

-WINTER RECESS: Typically the week of Christmas through the First week of January, (two weeks total)

-MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY

-PRESIDENT'S DAY

SPRING RECESS (in either March or April)

-Last Day of School is the Friday before Memorial Day

Makeup Day Policy

-Sick day: One (1) makeup day can be used per school year if your child is absent due to illness. This makeup day must be used within 30 days of being absent.

-Weather closures: If we close due to unsafe weather, makeup days can be used within 30 days of the weather closure.

-Family Travel: no makeup days can be used when families choose to travel and children are absent

-Makeup days cannot be used the last week of the school year

-Summer makeup days: there are no makeup days for Summer Term

-School year makeup days do not carry over into summer, or future school years

What is my child required to bring daily?

- Backpack
- Medium sized Water Bottle (fill with cool water in warmer months, warm water in colder months)
- Change of Clothes (socks, underwear, pants, shirt)
- Large snack with energy packed foods

Reminder:

- Must wear long pants, and close toed shoes
- Sun Hats in the Summer
- Parents must apply sunscreen and bug spray prior to class time if desired

Food

With the amount of activity your child will engage in while attending our programs, we **require that you send your child with a large snack (lunchbox style). We recommend high energy and sustainable foods.**

We encourage children to listen to their bodies, and decide when they feel hungry, or full. We allow children to eat their food outside of designated snack times.

We do require that you send your child with a medium sized water bottle filled with slightly warm water in colder months, and cooler water in warmer months.

Please notify us if your child has any allergies.

Although children are not allowed to share food during class, it is important that we are aware of any allergies your child has.

Please put this information in your child's profile/medical information on Brightwheel.

Enrollment

Email us to inquire about enrollment.

Once accepted, you will receive invites to get connected to the required Brightwheel APP to complete:

- Enrollment Form
- Liability Waiver
- Your Child's Profile
- Add approved adults for pickup (first/last names, phone numbers)
 - ie: nannies, babysitters, friends, family members, etc.
- Medical Information
- Set-Up Parent Billing
- Pay your Enrollment Fee
- (Summer Only) Make your Summer Payment Immediately
- Turn ON notifications for Brightwheel in your phone settings

Tuition

Tuition is due on the first of every month. There is one tuition rate each month depending on how many days your child attends each week.

If your child attends on Mondays: Monday closure due to a holiday, you can attend another day within 30 days for a makeup day for Monday closures.

Payments are made through the Brightwheel app.

Tuition is ***non-refundable***.

Termination of enrollment: You are able to terminate your child's enrollment at any time, however, any payments that have already been made are ***non-refundable***.

Tuition is due on the first of every month. Invoices are sent out 5 days prior to the 1st.

Tuition fees:

Enrollment/Registration Fee: \$50

(One enrollment fee applied to all consecutive school year attending_

One day/week, 220/month

Two days/week, 440/month

Three days/week, 660/month

Four days/week, 870/month

Five days/week, 1060/month

Drop in Days, 55/day

SUMMER TUITION payment is due IMMEDIATELY upon Summer enrollment (due date is typically set a week from confirmed enrollment, after the due date, your spot will be opened to others)

Enrollment fee \$50

1/ day a week: \$220/4weeks, \$440/8weeks

2/days a week: \$440/4weeks, \$880/8weeks

3/days a week: \$660/4 weeks, \$1320/8weeks

4/days a week: \$880/4weeks, \$1760/8weeks

5/days a week: \$1100/4 weeks, \$2200/8weeks

Tuition for Summer is non-refundable, whether your child attends or not.
No makeup days offered for summer.

Drop off/Pick up

Drop off is promptly at 8:30 am

We will begin our walk no later than 8:45am. If the child is late, the parent will need to escort their child to meet up with us.

Pickup is promptly at 12:15

Please be punctual with pickup. A \$5 late fee is charged for every 5 minutes a parent is late past 12:30 pm.

All adults approved for pickup must be in your child's Brightwheel profile, and must bring their ID.

Communicating with Teachers

While our program is in session, you are welcome to message through the Brightwheel App. All teachers, and our Director receive notifications on their phone when a parent sends a message.

A great resource of information is in this Handbook, or more general information can be found on our website <https://www.thechildselement.org>

Any questions can be sent to the Director through Brightwheel or email: contact@thechildselement.org

If you need to communicate future days where your child will be absent, medical information, or a family situation, please do so via email (contact@thechildselement.org) or for more time sensitive information, text our Director at (801) 390-4730.

Responses can be expected between 8am and 6pm Monday-Friday.

--We also ask that logistical information is not conveyed during transition times to allow teachers to focus on the children and starting the day at our Forest School--

THANK YOU!

**By Supporting The Child's Element, You Are Supporting a Bigger Movement to
CHANGE THE WORLD.**

You Are Appreciated!