

THE CHILD'S ELEMENT

FOREST PRESCHOOL (ages 3-6)

&

SUMMER NATURE PROGRAMS (ages 3-12)

Handbook For Parents



Introduction

The Child's Element was Founded by Sara Luran and provides daily nature field trips. These programs are held in Salt Lake City, Utah, in the beautiful foothills of the Wasatch mountains.

The Child's Element Forest Preschool Program and Summer Nature Program will guide your child in developing an emotional intelligence while exploring their wide and vast imagination. From creative expression and meditation, to building forts, hiking mountains, 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.

The Child's Element 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 weekly/monthly curriculum 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 The Child's Element 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 thoroughly trained and overseen to ensure our gentle approach remains consistent from teacher to teacher.

Our curriculum was specifically developed for The Child's Element to support children in their own individuality and self, acquire valuable life skills, and to establish kindergarten readiness. The way of The Child's Element allows children to flourish through nature immersion. 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, risk management and 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

Our team of teachers is overseen by Sara Luran, the Founder and Executive Director of The Child's Element. She has formulated her own teacher training specific to supervising children in nature, and in The Child's Element's unique approach to guiding and interacting with children.

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

All teachers have Food Handler Permits.

Our teachers carry first aid kits and other survival supplies.

For more detailed information on our teachers please visit our website (<https://www.thechildselement.org>).

Kindergarten readiness and valuable life skills gained in our program

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 willingness to take appropriate risk. 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, 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. We 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 already be 3 years old, potty trained, and able to follow simple instructions and basic safety rules. We also expect children in our program to communicate basic needs such as thirst, hunger, bathroom needs, etc.

Discipline policy

At The Child’s Element, we model and foster gentleness 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.

At The Child’s Element, we have a zero tolerance policy for hitting, grabbing, pushing, name calling, kicking, or any other demeaning behaviors. If a child becomes aggressive, a teacher will calmly and gently remove the 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.

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 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" "your face is telling me that you are feeling sad, may I sit with you?"

We empower children in learning how to work with others while simultaneously enhancing their individuality. If it is necessary to your child's feeling of safety, we will hold and carry him/her. If your child ever reports any type of negative experience at The Child's Element, 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 potty trained. Teachers are able to assist with toileting, however, we are unable to change diapers. There is a designated private spot in the forest specifically for toileting. We help children understand proper elimination techniques in nature, and we explain that it's not always allowed to go potty outside, but it's allowed in our outdoor classroom, when access to conventional bathrooms are not available.

Ensuring success

We ensure the success of our program and your child by

1. Carefully monitoring your 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 assessment of risks and hazards in our environment

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 fitten, 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-roof 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 REI.
- 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 Gordini or Outdoor Research.
 - **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) these work better for kids than scarves as they won't get caught on anything while children are at play.

Warmer Months and Summer

- Clothing and footwear should be comfortable and non-restricting
- Please do not dress in one piece clothing as it can be difficult when a child needs to use the bathroom
- A sunhat is suggested during the summer
- Please apply sunscreen to your child prior to drop-off

Recommended brands/companies to purchase gear from:

Cotopaxi (Backpack)

Oakiwear (Outer rain shell and rain boots)

Bogg Boots (Required cold weather and snow boots)

Kirkhams (Local company)

Dirty clothing at Pickup

Your child will likely end the day at our program with dirty clothing. Parents often bring a 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 dangerous. On days when driving becomes a concern, we will adhere to Salt Lake City School District's decisions in regard to closures. Any time Salt Lake City school district is closed, The Child's Element will be closed that day. In the case of late start, or closures, parents will be notified by 7:00am.

You can find out about closures by checking the Salt Lake City school district's website.

Due to our program being completely outdoors, there may be days where we utilize a separate location, such as a public library or public park with a covered area. Parents will be notified by 7AM if drop off location has changed for that particular day.

Absence due to illness

Your child is welcome to come to school with sniffles, coughs, sneezes or a stuffy nose; germs are not as likely to pass in our outdoor setting.

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

If your child is too sick to attend please text or call our Director Sara Luran at (801) 390-4730.

Emergency Situations

Although it is unlikely, in the event of an emergency, such as extreme weather, fire, earthquakes, these protocols will be followed:

- Teachers will notify parents of the situation immediately, unless evacuation takes precedence. Parents will be notified as soon as it is safe.
- Evacuation: Return to the pick up location and contact parents.
- If it is necessary for us to leave our forested location, but immediate pickup is not required, teachers and students will return to the pick-up location and await the parent's return at 12:30pm (or earlier, if the parent desires).
- If the situation requires evacuation of the forest, and immediate pickup is required, teachers will return the children to the pick-up location and contact parents for their prompt return.

The Child's Element Family

It is crucial 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.

We will host special events at the beginning and end of each academic year for the whole family. These are events for you and your children to have fun, connect with nature as a family, meet other families, and bring our community together.

Schedule

- The Forest Preschool Program (Fall, Winter, Spring terms) is held:
 - Mondays and Wednesdays, 8:30a-12:30p
 - Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30a-12:30p
 - Or a 4-day option of Monday through Thursday 8:30a-12:30p
 - Our program serves 8-12 children per class.

- Our Summer Nature Program is held:
 - Mondays and Wednesdays, 8:30a-12:30p
 - Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:30am-12:30pm
 - Or a 4-day option of Monday through Thursday 8:30a-12:30p
 - This program serves 8-15 children per class, depending on the ages that make up each group

(Children enrolled in Forest Preschool are not automatically enrolled in the Summer Program. Please notify the Director if you are interested in securing a place for Summer Term)

A typical day:

8:30 Drop off / Welcome Circle

8:45 Hike/Walk IN

9:00 Unstructured imaginative play and activities – running, climbing trees, supported team building activities

10:00-10:45 Snack/ Story Time

11:00 Unstructured imaginative play and activities – running, climbing trees, supported team building activities

12:00 Goodbye Circle/Express Gratitude Hike/Walk OUT

12:15 Hike/Walk Out

12:30 Pick up / Sign-out

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)
- Lunch/Large Snack

Food

With the amount of activity your child will engage in while attending our programs,

we require that you send your child with a packed lunch daily.

We will provide a healthy snack, served family style, including a combination of seasonal fruits or vegetables, nuts or seeds, beans or hummus. Having a family style snack encourages children to learn manners and to decide for themselves how much they need. We also 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 special dietary need, or allergies.

Enrollment

Enrollment forms are found on the website under the Enrollment tab. Once we have received your child's enrollment form, you will be notified of acceptance, or a placement on a waitlist.

UPON ACCEPTANCE:

- Your child's first month tuition will be due within 30 days of enrollment acceptance.

- Every parent is required to read and understand the information within the Handbook for Parents. This is critical for your child's success in our program.
- PARENTS WILL BE REQUIRED TO READ AND SIGN THE FOLLOWING FORMS:
 - Liability Waiver (PRINT AND BRING ON CHILD'S FIRST DAY)
 - First Aid Consent (ONLINE)
 - Photo Release Waiver (ONLINE)

Tuition

Tuition for our program is \$48 per day. Tuition is due on the first of every month.

We accept Venmo (@childselement, 801-390-4730), or options through our invoicing system

A \$5 per day late fee will be applied to late payments.

Tuition is non-refundable.

Drop off/Pick up

Please email us or speak with our Director for your child's group location.

- On snowy, rainy, or bad air quality days, drop off location is subject to change.

PARENTS WILL BE NOTIFIED BY 7:00AM IF THERE IS A LOCATION CHANGE.

Drop off is promptly at 8:30 am.

We will begin our hiking departure no later than 8:40am. If the child is late, the parent will need to escort their child to our outdoor classroom.

Pickup is promptly at 12:30 pm

Please be punctual with pickup. A \$5 late fee is charged for every 5 minutes a parent is late past 12:40 pm

A sign out sheet will be signed each day for every child at pickup. All adults approved to pick up your child will need to provide a copy of their Drivers License prior to pickup, and a written consent signed by the parent.

Communicating with Teachers

While our program is in session, our Director can be reached at (801) 390-4730.

Otherwise, please refer to our website <https://www.thechildselement.org> or email us at 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. Please do not text after 9pm or before 6am.

--We also ask that logistical information is not conveyed during transition times--

THANK YOU!

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

You Are Appreciated!