



# FOREST FRIENDS

## OF THE KEY PENINSULA

Forest Friends of the KP Nature School Parent Handbook

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*Welcome to Forest Friends of the KP! We are an outdoor nature-based preschool under the Key Peninsula Preschool Umbrella.*

## **Overview**

At Forest Friends of the KP, our emphasis is on the physical, cognitive and social/emotional growth of children ages 2.5-5 years. Children are presented with experiences allowing them to discover and explore their world through art, science, language, music, dramatic play and the natural environment. Our Outdoor School offers small ratios with mixed age groups of 1 Teacher to every 5 children. We integrate elements of Reggio Emilia philosophy, emergent curriculum, forest school philosophies, and help children develop a strong "sense of place" as a foundation for our program. Our goal is to promote every child's individual development using an appropriate mix of academic activities and the outdoors and help them feel proud of where they live and the natural world that surrounds them.

### **Philosophy and Goals**

Forest Friends of the KP provides a safe and welcoming environment for children from 2.5 through 5 years of age. Forest Friends of the KP believes in the development of the whole child growing cognitively, socially, physically, and emotionally through play. As they play, children construct knowledge by engaging in meaningful learning experiences. Forest Friends of the KP provides an environment that allows children to continually apply the knowledge they gain in new experiences in an inviting, supportive, enriching atmosphere. We believe parents are essential partners and we work together to help children grow in reaching their full potential.

Our goals at Forest Friends of the KP are to help our children become:

- good friends and community members
- self-directed individuals
- independent learners
- question posers
- problem solvers
- music and art lovers

## **II. Rights, Non-discrimination, and Licensing**

### **A. Licensing**

Forest Friends of the KP forest school is licensed by the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families. All aspects of our program including administration, facility, curriculum, health, and safety practices are periodically inspected. The results of any and all licensing visits are posted in a notebook on the Parent sign-in table along with a copy of the DEL minimum Licensing Requirements. We are accountable to the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) for licensed childcare facilities.

## **B. Non-Discrimination**

Forest Friends of the KP does not discriminate against anyone based on race, color, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, political ideology, age, creed, religion, ancestry, military statnational origin, or disability.

## **C. Religious, Cultural Diversity, and Holidays**

We enjoy acknowledging the Holidays, traditions, and cultural events that our families value in their lives. Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula does not recognize any Holiday or cultural event as representative of our organization and we maintain an openness to our community and embrace the differences and similarities that our families share. We enjoy learning about your family traditions. We would love to celebrate the birthday of your child as a class, or any other significant event that your family wished to share with the school. Your teacher will collaborate with you to arrange a class celebration that works best in their daily routine and that fits your family traditions. Please work with your classroom teacher to determine if there are any allergies or other needs of students before purchasing celebratory food for the occasion.

## **D. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance and Special Needs**

Forest Friends of the KP does not discriminate based on learning, physical, or developmental disabilities. Forest Friends of the KP is a program of Key Peninsula Preschool. We comply with the ADA, and we will try to make reasonable accommodation for children with special needs. **In order for Forest Friends of the KP to help your child/ren, you will need to inform Forest Friends of the KP of any special needs.** Forest Friends of the KP utilizes a 3-acre Forest owned by Key Peninsula Lutheran church with restrooms available in McColley Hall.

## **E. Forest Friends of the KP's School Does Not Tolerate Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying**

Forest Friends of the KP does not tolerate harassment, intimidation, or bullying, and any instances should be reported promptly to Forest Friends of the KP Lead Teacher/Director. "Harassment, intimidation, or bullying" means:

Any intentionally written message or image—including those that are electronically transmitted—verbal, or physical act, including but not limited to one shown to be motivated by race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, including gender expression or identity, mental or physical disability or other distinguishing characteristics, when an act:

- Physically harms a student or damages the student's property or
- Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education or

- Is so severe, persistent or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment or
- Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the program.

<http://www.k12.wa.us/SafetyCenter/BullyingHarassment/default.aspx>; see also <http://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/washington.html>.

#### **F. No Right to Forest Friends of the KP's School**

The Forest Fiends of the KP forest school reserves the right to refuse service for any lawful reason, including but not limited to:

- Failure by parents or children to treat Forest Friends of the KP's school staff and children respectfully and appropriately
- Failure to follow the rules set forth in this Parent Handbook or otherwise communicated by Forest Friends of the KP's staff.
- Failure to pay fees due monthly in a timely manner.

Service may be refused at any time by the Director, who will notify the all program staff.

## **II. Full Day Program Schedule and Hours**

#### **A. Hours**

Forest Friends of the KP'S School operates a Full-day Program Monday through Friday, from 8:30am-3:30pm, twelve months a year.

There is an after School options for care which require an additional contract. The after school option operates from 3:30-5:30 and provides an evening snack.

#### **B. Waitlist Policies**

Forest Friends of the KP's is filled on a first-come, first-served basis according to the date the school has a record of receiving the deposits. If programs are full, the child's name will be put on a waiting list to fill vacancies as they occur. The waitlist requires a \$50 dollar deposit and the completion of initial student paperwork.

#### **C. Holiday, Training, Snow and Emergency Closures Policy**

Forest Friends of the KP's school is closed during the following holidays:

- Labor Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving and the following day
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day

- December 26th
- New Year's Eve
- New Years Day
- Martin Luther King's Birthday
- President's Day
- Memorial Day
- Fourth of July

Training Closures:

- Forest Friends of the KP will be closed annually for the Peninsula School District spring break and the last week of August.

Emergency/Inclement Weather Closures:

- Wind events wherein wind speeds exceed 20 miles per hour
- In the event that Pierce County issues a “READY” or Level 1 evacuation order for our region
- Air quality due to smoke reaches unhealthy air quality status
- Outdoor temperatures exceed 92 degrees F or are lower than 24 degrees F
- Natural disasters such as earthquake and fire
- Any storm event where there lightening, hail, that will occur for the duration of Of the day
- Any events that staff feel places the children in an unsafe environment
- We follow [nationalweatherservice.gov](http://nationalweatherservice.gov) for all weather reporting and [airnow.gov](http://airnow.gov) for air quality

Snow Closures

Forest Friends of the KP will close during any snow day closures in our area issued by the Peninsula School District. If the Peninsula School District is opening late, Forest Friends will attempt to open as soon as staff can safely arrive. On late arrival days parents must message through Brightwheel that they intend on bringing their child to school to help us determine staffing numbers and they must check in to receive confirmation that school will open late to call before bringing their child to school. Notices and messaging will be sent through the Brightwheel app.

Closures When School is in Session:

In the event of an unscheduled early school closure, Forest Friends of the KP will plan to be open for two hours after the closure, using available staff and volunteer parents. Parents will be notified through the Brightwheel app and if needed, by phone of the closure and should make every effort to pick up their children as soon after the closure as possible. If a

parent is unable to pick up the child within two hours (or earlier, if Forest Friends of the KP determines two hours is impracticable), staff will call emergency contacts. If no one is reachable, the Director will take over responsibility for the children until an authorized person is available. If children are taken to another location, signs will be posted at McColley Hall with complete information.

#### **D. Closures Due to Staffing Issues**

Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula reserves the right to enact a school closure if emergency issues arise that affect staffing. Examples of this may include a Covid-19 or other disease outbreak that results in multiple simultaneous staff absences, a natural disaster, or an event that impacts staff ability to get to work safely, or a snow event.

If an occasion arises where both the director and assistant directors will be absent from the site due to illness, an emergency situation, or other factors school will be closed for the day. If both the director and both assistant directors must leave during the school day parents will be notified and the program will be overseen by the highest qualified lead teacher until parents can arrive and pick up their children.

### **III. School Policies and Procedures**

#### **A. Absences and Schedule Changes**

- It is important that your child maintains consistent attendance in our program. Children benefit from consistency and daily routines. Consistent attendance helps students develop deep social connections with their school friends and strong bonds with their teachers. Frequent absences disrupt these healthy processes and can cause children to feel stressed and backslide on developmental gains that they have made.
- If your child is absent, no tuition credits or makeup days will be given; tuition remains the same whether your child attends or not.
- Permanent enrollment changes and requests for schedule changes cannot be guaranteed, but every effort will be made to accommodate children on a space available basis.
- To make a permanent schedule change during the school year, you must provide a written notice by the 15th of the month prior to exiting service, including other programs.
- During these notification periods, previously contracted fees will be charged.

#### **B. Arrivals and Departures**

- Remember to sign in and out EVERY DAY. Parents MUST sign their child in through Brightwheel on the provided tablet and are required to deliver their child INTO the

classroom/program. It is the responsibility of the parent to alert staff to their child's arrival. This can be as simple as a wave and a "Good morning". However, it is important that eye contact is made and that you receive acknowledgement from the teacher that he or she is aware your child is present.

- Transitioning into the classroom in the morning can be a particularly difficult time for some children emotionally. Establishing a routine for drop-off that includes greeting the Teachers, kissing or hugging, or even a special handshake makes this transition from home to school less stressful for the child (and the parent!). Extended good-byes can cause undue distress for the child. We always want parents to feel welcome in their child's classroom. However, usually it is better to read a book, tour the room, or hear about a project at pick-up at the end of the day when you have rejoined your child.
- At the end of the day please remember to sign your child out. Only authorized adults will be allowed to pick-up a child, even in case of an emergency. If we do not recognize the person picking your child up, we will ask for identification. It is very important that parents maintain current information on their contact list and authorized pick-up list.
- Do not leave children unattended while in the building, forest, and parking lot. Keep children within arms reach in the parking lot. Keep children within your eyesight in the forest or in buildings. Please respect the property of the school and the KP Lutheran Church.
- Unlike our other programs, parents may not attend Forest School with their child. This is due to licensing requirements that all adults in the classroom must have a background check. Parents/caregivers can spend unlimited time in our designated "Family Areas."
- Be timely and respectful to staff when dropping off/picking up your child. We believe it is critical for our Teachers to be supported. We build in time at the beginning and end of their day to set up, clean, and get organized for the next day. Do not drop off your child before 8:30 am. Please do not chat with friends or linger while your children continue to play in the classroom. During class this distracts the students from their play and after school lingering forces staff to monitor your child when they would otherwise be organizing their classroom. This results in staff staying later than their intended shift.

- Children picked up late or left after 3:30pm (or 5:30pm for the after school program) will be subjected to a late fee. Late fees are assessed at the rate of \$10 for the first 1-5 minutes (e.g., 3:01pm to 3:05pm), and \$2 per minute thereafter. At 6:00pm staff members will attempt to contact parents/legal guardians or other authorized persons. After 7:30pm, appropriate actions may necessitate calling law enforcement and Child Protective Services. In the case of repeated late pick-ups, Forest Friends of the KP reserves the right to refuse further service.

### **C. Adult Rules of Conduct and Program Termination**

Any parent, parent representative, child, or Forest Friends of the KP staff who display any of the following behaviors may be removed from the program:

- No adult will be verbally or physically abusive on Forest Friends of the KP school grounds.
- No child or adult will be harassed. This includes unwanted physical contact, intimidation or bullying; sexist or racist comments; or comments of a sexual nature to a parent, child, or staff member.
- No alcoholic beverages, cannabis, illegal substances, or use of these will be allowed at Forest Friends of the KP School or any school event.
- No child will be released to anyone who appears intoxicated or under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Smoking is prohibited in classroom environments and school buildings.
- Possession of any type of firearm or weapon at Forest Friends of the KP or during any Forest Friends of the KP School activity is always prohibited (with the exception of law enforcement personnel).
- If anyone in our school community feels harassment has taken place should promptly inform the Director, or Office Manager.
- Forest Friends of the KP School reserves the right to immediately refuse service to anyone for violating any of these prohibited activities.

### **D. Permissions for Photography and Video Recordings.**

A permission form must be signed by each child's Parent or Guardian in order to photograph or videotape their child/ren. Please refrain from photographing children that are not your own on school grounds.

### **E. Child Abuse and Neglect Policy**

Washington State law requires that all childcare providers who suspect that a child in their care has been abused or neglected must make a report. It is mandatory that all staff members of the Forest Friends of the KP must report any form of abuse or neglect of a child or risk termination of their position. The Director or staff person will make an official report on behalf of the school to Child Protective Services (C.P.S.) or law enforcement. Reports are kept confidential. Referrals are made to C.P.S. without conferring with parents.

Reporting should be regarded as a request for an investigation into a suspected incident of abuse or neglect. A report does not necessarily constitute a proven fact; rather, it raises an inquiry about the health of a child. Making a report can be the beginning of a process to help parents and to protect children. Current C.P.S. reporting policy requires all mandated persons must report any incidents of child sexual play (even when potentially developmentally appropriate) and any incidents of sexual harassment. It is C.P.S.'s intent to track these incidents to see if any pattern develops.

## **F. Confidentiality**

While working with the children in our program, we often learn of very private family matters. The ethics of our profession and the expectation of the Forest Friends of the KP school is that information of a confidential nature is disclosed only to those with a need to know. Please bring all concerns (e.g., no-contact or protection orders, change in parenting plans, custody arrangements, etc.) to the attention of the Director and Lead Teacher.

## **G. Consistent Care Policy**

The Forest Friends of the KP school strives to provide consistent care. Staff are assigned to work with the same group of children for much of the day and school year with a goal of building long-term, trusting relationships. Consistent care can have the following benefits: it deepens the Teacher's knowledge of individual children, decreases stress, creates secure attachments, enhances a child's learning experience.

## **H. Pesticides Policy**

Pesticides are occasionally used by the Key Peninsula Lutheran Church with whom we share the property. The Lutheran Church will only apply pesticides on the weekends and they will inform us of when they will be applied. We will provide a written notice to families 24 hours in advance when we receive any notification that pesticides could be used in any space the children inhabit.

# **IV. Enrollment and Fees**

## **A. Enrollment**

- Before a child may attend, enrollment materials must be completed, signed, and returned to our Office Manager through Brightwheel. This includes an application, two emergency cards, an immunization form, a parent contract, consent and authorization form, and the Parent Handbook signature page. A one-time non-refundable registration fee, currently \$150, is required for each child formally enrolling at the Forest Friends of the KP school.
- Registration materials are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, and Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula maintains waiting lists.

- The Forest Friends of the KP school requires a 2-Week Trial Period Policy. We strive to provide care to all children regardless of development or ability. We have to be honest with families about the level of care the Forest Friends of the KP is able to provide for all children. Our forest environment is a unique setting and may not be suitable for every child. To assess if our program is a 'good fit' for your child/ren we require a 2-week trial period at which time the Forest Friends of the KP school reserves the right to un-enroll your child/ren for any reason. During this trial period we will do our best to have daily communication and work with you and your child/ren to the best of our abilities. But if at any time during the first two weeks upon enrolling your child/ren we feel we cannot provide the care we believe your child/ren needs, we reserve the right to notify you, as soon as we deem necessary, to un-enroll your child/ren from the Forest Friends of the KP school.

## **B. Emergency Contact Cards**

Forest Friends of the KP must have on file two completed emergency cards for each child. Emergency contacts are adults who can assist your child when you are unreachable. Please remember to inform Forest Friends of the KP about changes in address and telephone numbers for yourself or your designated emergency contacts. Current contact information is most important during such events as a medical emergency, snowstorm, earthquake, or power failure. At least one contact must live within enough proximity to reach the school by walking if necessary, in the case of an emergency affecting other forms of transportation. Importance for keeping information current: It is important to keep your personal information including personal and work phone numbers, place of employment, and home addresses current along with your emergency contact's information as well. We need to be able to contact you at a moment's notice regarding your child's health and well-being, especially in case of emergency. Your child's file is kept in our office which stays locked when we are not open. Emergency cards are kept in each classroom inside a lockbox in each First Aid backpack and in a locked cabinet within the office. These cards can be utilized by staff during emergencies and other situations where your child needs to be picked up unexpectedly and the staff do not have access to Brightwheel.

## **C. Cancellation Notices**

Cancellation requires a written notice by the 15th of the prior month. If this notice is not received, you will receive a bill for that month.

## **D. Full Day Program Fees & Tuition Rates**

- The monthly tuition for Forest Friends of the KP School 8:30-3:30 daily program is \$1495 per month. Tuition includes the yearly use of: A muddy buddy suit for your child, high quality waterproof boots, naptime provisions, breakfast, lunch, and snacks
- The after school 3:30-5:30 program is \$165 monthly. This program includes an afternoon snack.

- Enrollment Deposit: There is a \$150 deposit required upon enrollment. Deposits are applied to your last month of care if you have given a written 30-days' notice of cancellation of care.
- Tuition and Fees are determined by taking the annual tuition and dividing it across 12 months. Therefore, tuition and fees are the same every month including the closures for holidays, staff trainings, snow/emergency closures

#### **E. Family Discounts**

- If you have 2+ children enrolled in Forest Friends of the KP school each child receives a 10% discount.

#### **G. Payment Arrangements, Late Fee Policy, Late Payments, and Returned Checks**

- We can set up payment arrangements to pay childcare fees bi-monthly or monthly. Please let us know what works best for your family. Your payment schedule will determine when fees are due. Bi-monthly: fees are due the 1st and 15th of each month. If fees are not paid by the 5th and 15th, a \$50 late fee will be applied to your next invoice, prepared twice monthly. Monthly: fees are due by the 1st of each month. If fees are not received by the 15th of each month, a \$50 late fee will be applied to your next invoice, prepared monthly.
- If you anticipate difficulty making a payment on time, promptly communicate with Jessica (JessicaSchock@KeyPeninsulaPreschool.org to discuss alternative arrangements. If you are given a past due notice and we do not receive payment in full by the 15th day of the month. Your child may be suspended immediately until payment is received.
- A \$35.00 charge will be assessed if a check is returned to Forest Friends of the KP school.

#### **H. Subsidies**

Forest Friends of the KP school is committed to helping families gain access to quality care regardless of their financial situation. Our school has contracted with the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (D.C.Y.F) to accept payments from this source. Information about this subsidy program is available upon request. Students receiving subsidy payments can apply for scholarships to cover before/after school programs.

#### **I. Refund Policy**

- No refunds are given for sick days or individually chosen vacation days.
- Enrollment fees will be refunded if the school is unable to accept a child due to space availability.
- Pre-paid monthly fees are refunded on a prorated basis if you give at least a 30-day written cancellation notice that your child will be discontinuing care. Exceptions may be made by management on a case-by-case basis.

## J. Field Trips

Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula currently does not offer field trips. As our school resources expand this policy may change. If this occurs Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula will create a new policy which will be shared with families and DCYF.

## V. Our Curriculum and Schedules

### A. Curriculum

Forest Friends of the KP uses a variety of early childhood educational philosophies:

- **Reggio Emilia** - based on the idea that children are capable of learning on their own and are full of potential. The approach emphasizes the child's role in constructing knowledge and developing skills through exploration, self-expression, and collaboration with their peers and teachers.
- **Emergent Curriculum** - is a teaching philosophy and curriculum design method that focuses on children's interests, strengths, needs, and learning styles. It's based on the idea that children are most successful when curriculum experiences align with their individual characteristics.
- **Sense of Place** - We feel that it is important to help our students develop a strong sense of belonging and pride in the place they are raised. We hope to develop pride, understanding, and appreciation for the Key Peninsula and the beautiful natural environment that surrounds us.
- **Forest School** - is a philosophical approach to outdoor learning that focuses on a child-centered, holistic learning experience. It aims to help children develop socially, emotionally, and physically, while also building a connection to nature and understanding their place in the world. Forest schools often emphasize:
  - Holistic development - Forest schools help children grow in many ways, including physically, socially, and emotionally. For example, they can help children improve their motor skills, balance, and agility, as well as their communication and social skills.
  - Connection to nature - Forest schools encourage children to build positive relationships with nature, with the goal of helping them become stewards of the planet. Children can experience a world not made by humans, and feel part of a larger community of life.
  - Risk-taking - Forest schools encourage supported risk-taking, which can help children build self-belief and resilience. Children can learn to overcome challenges, such as dealing with the weather or building their own shelter.
  - Learner-centeredness - Forest school leaders adapt sessions to suit each child's interests, motivations, and attitude, as well as how they impact the team dynamic. They may also use conversation, stories, and activities to challenge bias, stereotypes, and discrimination, and promote inclusivity.

## **B. Learning Through Play**

Through play children develop social and cognitive skills, are able to mature emotionally, develop problem-solving skills, and gain the self confidence to try new experiences and environments. Children's play can be divided into the following:

- o Active play - Running, jumping, climbing, riding, and use of large muscles.  
Quiet play reading, art, reflective discovery.
- o Cooperative play - Games and activities that involve more than one.
- o Manipulative play - Puzzles, blocks, cutting and pasting, or activities that involve activities in which one expresses themselves creatively.
- o Creative play - Painting, problem solving, dance, music, storytelling, or imaginative play.
- o Dramatic play - Dress-up, playing house, or any activity that involves eye-hand coordination or fine motor muscles.

## **C. Class Sizes and Ages of Children in Each Class**

Forest Friends of the KP maintains a ratio of 1 staff per every 5 children. This ratio allows us to develop nurturing relationships with each child and provide the safety and individualized attention that each child needs. We have two classes of 15 children that operate on the Lutheran Church campus. These classes are mixed-age with children who range in age from 2.5 - 6 years of age. Children will be placed in the class that is the best fit based on the teacher, social connections among students, and classroom community.

## **D. Our Daily Forest Program and Schedule:**

### Forest School Breakfast and Drop off:

**8:30-9:30** - Our Forest school program will provide a healthy and filling breakfast.

Children can eat breakfast anytime they arrive between 8:30-9:30. Breakfast will not be served after 9:30. After breakfast the children will be offered free choice of the following activities:

- Art, manipulatives, and puzzles
- Outdoor activities on the playground
- Reading

On rainy/cold days we will dress the children in their muddy buddy suits and boots before moving into our forest program.

### Forest School Program:

**9:30-10:30 - Free Choice**

Our free choice activities are designed to promote investigation, inspiration, social connections, and mental growth. Daily activities will be developed based upon child interest and teacher observations. They will be developed to support the developmental needs of children. Daily activities will include:

- Exploration of the forest and projects that the children may be interested in.
- Daily art and nature crafting activities.
- Educationally enriching activities such as mathematics, science, and pre-literacy skills embedded in the forest school learning environment.
- Activities that promote the development of fine motor skills such as picking edible native berries, cutting leaves, learning to tie knots, and a wide variety of other fine motor activities.
- Gross motor activities that fit within the natural forest environment such as climbing on stumps, balancing on logs, running, and carrying materials to make a shelter.

**10:30-10:50 - Snacktime**

**10:50-11:10 - Nature Walk**

**11:10 - 12:10 - Free Choice**

**12:10 - 12:20 - Circle Time**

- This includes sharing, songs, books, educational activities, and discussions

**12:20 - 12:30 - Wash Hands**

**12:30 - 12:50 - Lunch**

- We will provide a nutritious USDA approved lunch for every child

**12:50- 2:30 - Nap/Quiet Time & Free Choice Activities**

- Children will be provided with a sleeping bag, children who do not nap can participate in quiet free choice activities.

**2:30-2:50 Snacktime**

**2:50-3:30- Free Choice**

**Optional After School Program:**

**3:30 - 4:30 - Our after school program will provide various activities that include:**

- Art, manipulatives, crafts, and puzzles
- Outdoor activities on the playground
- Reading

**4:30 - 4:45** - Optional snack

**4:45 - 5:30** - Free play and Departures

- Departures can occur at any time that is convenient for the family.

## **E. Daily Program Components**

Our daily program will always include

- Whole Group Activities: where the entire class comes together to share and discuss topics that are important to them and where teachers can spur interest in diverse topics.
- Small Group Activities: where smaller groups gather to work on projects of interest, explore questions, and construct learning in social settings.
- Child Directed Play - Child led play holds a high priority in our classroom. We encourage free choices and self-direction and tune into our students' interests, discoveries, and investigations. The children's interests drive our curriculum and teacher led activities.
- Teacher Led Activities - Teacher led activities that follow student interests or are meant to spark interest and deepen understanding. These activities may include art, science projects, or musical activities.
- Nature Play - Our students will be encouraged to explore the natural world around them and engage with the forest environment in their play. This may include tree climbing, building shelters, digging holes, pushing logs, or other similar activities.

## **F. Supporting Students with Unique Needs**

We seek to support the students with unique needs in our community whenever possible. We strive to meet the needs of individual students with special needs and dual language learners. We are happy to collaborate with parents, family members, therapists, physicians, and/or mental health providers to create an individualized education program for your child.

We strongly support dual language learners and seek to partner with families to learn key words in the child's original language to communicate with the child. We also recognize that dual language learners may follow differing developmental trajectories and that this is completely normal. If your child is a dual language learner, we will collaborate

with you to create an individualized learning plan to support your child's development learning both languages.

If your child has been diagnosed with a developmental delay and/or a disability, please let the Director know at enrollment. We will partner with your family and any specialists that you work with to create an individualized education plan that fits your child's needs. In certain circumstances a child with special needs may need additional support in order to be successful in the forest setting. We will discuss options such as one-on-one aids, and other assistive technologies to help your child participate in the preschool day. In the case that the child cannot participate safely in the forest environment we will discuss other options for early childhood education in our community and we are happy to make referrals and recommendations as needed.

## **VI. Food Services, Allergies and Naps**

### **A. Meals**

We serve a healthy breakfast and lunch as part of our program. We must follow USDA requirements to provide a balanced diet and we always include a protein, dairy, carbohydrate and vegetables/fruit. We wish to honor our local community by using fresh local produce whenever possible. We believe that meals are a time to connect with each other and come together as a community. With this in mind, we serve our meals "family style." We will offer breakfast indoors in McColley Hall and lunch will be served outdoors in a sheltered area. Children sit on the ground on canvas blankets, at picnic tables, or at tables when inside. We believe our students are capable and competent and we teach them to serve and clean-up after themselves.

### **B. Snacks**

We believe that snack times are a vital portion of the children's daily experience. It is an opportunity to try new foods, to take risks and discover new tastes, a chance to connect to their world around them, and practice independence. It is a time to listen to each other and be heard, to practice turn taking, to expand their vocabulary. We do not assume that children have only a limited repertoire of foods. Children are encouraged, but never forced to eat. We offer nutritious whole-food snacks prepared by our staff that are kid-friendly but also healthy.

### **C. Menu**

Our monthly menus will be posted on the Brightwheel app.

### **D. Food Allergies**

Please inform us upon enrollment or shortly after diagnosis about any food allergies that your child may have. We will ask that you work with your child's pediatrician to complete our allergy planning form. We will need detailed information concerning the severity of your child's reaction, how their allergy presents, and the types of exposure that triggers a reaction. We have a nut free campus. (We can make exceptions for very special occasions or for items specific for a cultural event **IF** we do not have any students enrolled with a nut allergy. Please consult with the child's teacher before bringing items to school for birthdays or other special occasions. We are comfortable working with menus that provide gluten free, dairy-free, egg free, and nut free foods. Please meet with the director to discuss your child's specific needs. In rare instances we may need to ask the child to provide their own food or may deem that the significance of the allergy is not a safe fit for a forest school environment.

#### **E. Naps/Quiet Time**

Rest time Between approximately 12:50pm to 1:30pm all children nap or engage in quiet, restful activities during this time. We will provide a sleeping bag for each child in our program. The sleeping bag will be washed weekly. Children may bring a snuggle object for naptime only.

## **VII. Forest School Essentials**

#### **A. Weather Conditions**

If school is in session, we will spend the day outdoors in all types of weather conditions. We will celebrate nature by jumping in muddy puddles, collecting rainwater, and checking if we can see our breath on cold days. We will have covered tent spaces and a sheltered place for meals.

#### **B. Clothing Requirements**

Good gear helps children be warm, dry, and happy even in wet and cold weather. Our organization will provide muddy buddies and boots for every child, but we do ask that you check the weather daily and dress your child for the current weather conditions. This may mean that you dress your child in layers with warm socks on wet and cold days and dress your child in light breathable fabrics on days that are hot. On cold wet days we require that you provide your child with a moisture wicking layer, at least two sets of gloves, and a hat. We play hard and get messy often. Please do not send your child in their "best clothes". We encourage creativity and exploration and with that comes dirt, paint, clay, spaghetti sauce, mulch, and any other interesting material encountered during the day.

### **C. Required Clothing and School Items**

We ask that each child brings a backpack every day that is suitable for the forest environment. The children will bring their backpack into the forest every day and we will place them in cubbies in the tent. We commonly encounter instances where we may need to change your child's clothes. Please include in the child's backpack at least two clean, weather appropriate changes of clothing: shirts, pants, undergarments, socks and shoes. Please provide a clean water bottle for your child daily. Please clearly label anything that your child brings to school. It is amazing the amount of lovely clothes, coats, and shoes that go into our lost and found each year. Forest Friends of the KP cannot be held responsible for lost items.

### **D. Items from Home**

If your child has a special blanket or stuffed animal that is required during quiet time, please have it available on a regular basis. Otherwise, PLEASE always LEAVE ALL toys and other personal items at home. In addition, please keep candy, gum, money, and jewelry at home. These items cause conflicts, are difficult to share, and are easily lost or broken. At the end of each month, unclaimed articles are donated to charity.

### **E. Staff**

We provide the ratio of one staff member for 5 children at all times. The school is staffed with a Director/Lead Teacher and as many other Lead or Asst. Teachers are required to maintain this ratio. All professional staff have a minimum of 30 hours of basic MERIT training in Early Childhood and 10 hours continuing Early Childhood training annually. Most of the Lead professional staff have an Associate's or bachelor's degree in early childhood, are attending school, or have a degree in a related field. All staff are required to undergo the DCYF background check, hold a current CPR/First Aid card, and an up-to-date food handlers permit.

### **F. Animals at the School**

Forest Friends of the KP may have animals such as chickens, ducks, rabbits, etc. Your child may be interacting directly and helping care for these animals daily. We have an animal permission slip provided with your registration materials that allows your child to have direct contact with the Farm animals. As we acquire additional animals, we will provide a new animal permission slip to fill out.

### **G. Water activities**

Our children will interact with water often daily feeding animals, watering the garden, classroom activities, and play in shallow mud puddles. We will not interact with any large bodies of water, running streams, or any body of water over 4 inches. Teachers will supervise children at all times during any water play.

## **VIII. Emergency Plans**

We practice emergency preparedness with regular stop and return exercises, earthquake drills, fire drills, and animal encounter response. The school is stocked with emergency supplies. During our monthly drills, we practice evacuating McColley Hall, if the practice event includes a danger that would be encountered in the forest. We also practice evacuating from McColley hall to the far side of the parking lot in the scenario where the danger originates from within McColley Hall. In case of an actual emergency, parents or guardians will be contacted promptly by a phone call, text message, and/or email. In the case parents or guardians are not able to respond, staff will refer to the emergency card that is filed for each child and contact the next emergency contact listed on the card. Parents or guardians will be reunited with the children in our designated safe place, which is the western side of the parking lot, or in McColley Hall if the emergency had nothing to do with the safety of the building structure such as a fire or earthquake.

## **VI. Health Matters**

### **A. Meals and Snacks**

We use the USDA food program and breakfast, lunch, and snacks are provided. All snacks will consist of a healthy protein or carbohydrate and a fruit or vegetable. Meals will always include protein, cereal or grain, fruit and vegetables, and water, juice or milk. Menus will be provided through Bright wheel.

### **B. Allergies or Special Dietary Requirements**

Please let the staff know if your child has allergies or special dietary requirements. We will do everything within our means to accommodate the child's dietary requirements while following the UDSA food program requirements. Meals are prepared in a kitchen that serves wheat flour, dairy products, and eggs therefore there is a risk for cross-contamination. Please inform us if your child has a severe food allergy or dietary need and we can discuss if our facility can meet their needs.

We ask that we have written documentation from a physician for their records.

### **C. Health Policy**

We operate our services in an outdoor environment where children encounter cold and wet weather and situations that require a lot of physical activity. Therefore, it is even more imperative that you keep your children at home when they are not feeling well. We also wish to protect our staff from illness so we can prevent staff shortages and keep services running consistently. We ask that you follow a more rigorous determination than the current state requirements when deciding whether or not to keep your child at home. If your child is showing signs of illness and they are acting under the weather, we would ask

that you keep them home. Signs of illness that could impact a child's ability to participate in forest school and could potentially infect others are:

- A fever that is over one-hundred degrees Fahrenheit.
- Nasal discharge that green or yellow in color
- Any type of vomiting, especially if this out of the norm for your child
- Diarrhea or runny stools, especially if that is out of the norm for your child
- Any rash that is not associated with heat or an allergic reaction
- Sore throat, earache, deep cough, wheezing, significant stomach pain, or significant headache
- Lice, ringworm, scabies, pinworm, or another contagious parasite
- Has lethargy, consistent crying, difficulty breathing, or a significant change in behavior or activity level indicative of illness.

**Please do not medicate your child to cover up the symptoms of an illness.**

If a child becomes ill at school, our staff will determine whether the child should be sent home and separated from others. We will supervise the child to reasonably prevent contact between the ill child and healthy children. Staff will separate a child if:

- The illness or condition requires more care and attention than staff can give.
- The required amount of care for the ill child compromises or places at risk the health and the safety of other children in our care.
- There is a risk that the child's illness or condition will spread to other children or individuals. An ill child will be sent home or isolated from children in care if they have:
  - A fever over one-hundred- degrees Fahrenheit
  - Repetitively expressing discomfort to staff concerning a sore throat, earache, headache, or stomach pain.
  - If the child vomits while at school.
  - Runny/watery stools
  - A rash not associated with heat or an allergic reaction.
  - Open sores or wounds discharging bodily fluids that cannot be adequately covered with a waterproof dressing or mouth sores with drooling.
  - Lice, ringworm, or scabies. Individuals with head lice, ringworm, or scabies will be excluded from the premises beginning from the end of the day the head lice or scabies was discovered.
  - Appears severely ill, which may include lethargy, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, or a significant change in behavior or activity level indicative of illness.

If a parent cannot be reached, we will contact designated people on the Emergency Card. It is important for sick children to be picked up promptly. If a teacher or Director calls

a parent to report that their child is sick, it is critical that all efforts are made to come to the school to pick up the child as soon as possible.

Please know that before we make that call, we have done everything in our power to make the child comfortable and meet the child's needs. When we make the decision to call the parent, we do so know that we are asking the parent to leave their work or other responsibilities. While we understand the difficulties this causes, it is our job to keep all our children safe and healthy, including the child who is not feeling well. If it is going to be more than one hour before you can arrive to pick up your child, we ask that you plan for another person on your authorized pick-up list to come for the child. A child must be symptom-free, without a fever for 24 hours and well enough to participate in all activities, especially for outdoor play, before returning to school.

We ask that parents use good judgment and common sense when considering bringing their child back to school after an illness. For example, if a child is sent home in the afternoon due to illness, it is best for the child to stay at home the entire next day and return in the morning of the following day. In addition, if a child is sick with a contagious illness, it is best practice for parents to also keep siblings at home to try to limit further exposure.

We work very hard to keep the school germ free by washing our hands a lot, disinfecting toys, and teaching the children healthy practices such as coughing into their elbow and wiping noses with a tissue. We ask our families to support our efforts by always washing hands upon arrival, informing us about illnesses, and maintaining healthy practices in their homes.

Parents are asked to notify the school if a child is going to be absent from school, particularly if this is due to a contagious illness such as pink eye or chicken pox, etc. In these cases, parents of the child's classmates will be notified that there is an illness at the school, but your child's privacy will be respected, and names will not be used.

#### **D. Lice Policy**

If a child is found to have head lice while attending school, the child's parents will be contacted and asked to pick up their child immediately. Because lice are considered contagious, we must look after the best interests of all children attending our program. In the event a child is found to have lice or nits, all children will have their hair checked for nits by a staff member. Children found to have nits will be sent home with instructions for removal. Children will not be allowed to return to school until they are nit-free. Staff will be checked also. When lice are found, care-site dramatic-play clothes will be bagged up for a period of time exceeding the incubation period for lice. It is important that we have your cooperation in this matter.

#### **E. Medications**

When children attending Forest Friends of the KP forest school require prescription medications, written instructions from a physician and signature of parent or guardian must be on file. Our school is not allowed to administer over-the-counter medications without a physician's written order. No medications can ever be left at the school in a cubby at any time.

An "Instructions for Medication" form must be completed for each medication given. All medications must be stored in their original containers and will be kept in a specific sealed container with the first aid supplies. Medications will not be administered if the expiration date has passed. The medication must be clearly marked with the following: (1) child's name; (2) physician's name and number; (3) name and strength of medication; and (4) directions, time and method of administration; and (5) in its original label and packaging. Staff members will sign a medication form and log it in the first aid book after administrating the medication.

Although Forest Friends of the KP staff periodically check the expiration dates on all medicines, it is the parent's responsibility throughout the school year to make sure medicines kept at our school are current. The school applies sunscreen once a day in the summer months. Parents are asked to apply sunscreen in the morning before arriving to school.

## **VII. Approach to Discipline**

### **A. Conscious Discipline**

The behavior management program in our classrooms is grounded in the philosophies and principles outlined in Conscious Discipline by Dr. Becky Bailey. Conscious Discipline is an emotional intelligence program that teaches children to respond, rather than react during life events. Everyday life events are used as teachable moments and guide children to develop self-control, utilize tools for conflict resolution, boost self-esteem, and foster positive relationships and social skills. It is also based on current brain research, child development information and best educational practices.

Conscious Discipline is a social-emotional learning program that helps adults and children learn to manage their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. The program is based on the idea that adults should learn self-control and self-regulation before teaching children. The goal is to empower adults to model healthy behaviors for children, such as how to deal with conflict and difficult situations. Conscious Discipline integrates multiple learning domains into a single curriculum, including social, emotional, physical, cultural, and cognitive learning. The program is evidence-based and recognized by the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP). Research shows that Conscious Discipline can improve the social and emotional skills of students and teachers, increase academic readiness and achievement, and improve the quality of student-teacher interactions.

### **B. Consequences of Children's Inappropriate Behavior**

We prefer to use classroom management strategies and make environmental arrangements to support appropriate behaviors as our first response to inappropriate behaviors. If a child exhibits inappropriate behaviors with our environmental supports in place we use natural consequences whenever possible as a response. We strive to have our

consequences to inappropriate behaviors respect the child's spiritual, emotional, cultural, and physical well-being. We occasionally use a short "breather" to help children calm down, also known as 'taking a break' where the child takes a break from the classroom activities but remains in a quiet area accompanied by a calm adult. We teach that if a child is not being safe with themselves, their friends, staff, or our environment then they need to take a quiet break until we can show a calm and safe body and safe actions with their friends and teachers.

Through clear, consistent teacher responses we address a child's pattern of inappropriate behavior. If this proves ineffective, staff meet with the Director and the child's parents and discuss the child's situation. The Director will make classroom observations and will help the teachers and family create an individualized behavior plan to assist the child. All plans will be discussed and approved by the Lead Teacher and the child's family. If a child's behavior is dangerous to themselves or others and/or if they are unable to regain self-control and requires more individual attention than can be given within child to staff ratios, we will contact a parent and ask that they be picked up from school.

**Physical Restraint Policy** - We prefer to use the least invasive strategies to prevent aggressive actions presented by a student. In our experience these strategies are effective the majority of the time. In rare emergency situations, where the child exhibits a serious safety concern, staff may use limited physical restraint. Staff will hold the child for the shortest amount of time and as gently as possible if the child is engaging in behaviors that are dangerous to themselves or others or if they are using an object/weapon in a manner that could injure themselves or others. Any use of physical restraint will be recorded in an incident report and will be reported both to the parents and the Washington state Department of Children, Youth, and Families. Due to the nature of working in a forest environment, Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula reserves the right to expel any child that requires the use of restraints on multiple occasions to address serious safety concerns.

Staff work with parents to establish open communication and to problem-solve about children's behavior. We are happy to help guide the family towards beneficial resources in our community and are happy to make referrals to the child's physician, early childhood counselors, Part C service providers, and/or therapists to find the best support for the child. We encourage the use of wrap-around services to support the needs of our students. We welcome therapists/specialists on our campus and enjoy the knowledge they bring to our staff to better support our students.

### **C. Serious Disciplinary Problem/Expulsion Policy**

Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula values all the children who live on the Key Peninsula and we will do our utmost to collaborate with specialists and parents to individualize our programming to support any child displaying challenging behaviors. Due to the risks presented by the forest environment we must carefully consider how a child's behavior impacts themselves and the other children in our program. The expulsion of a child is taken very seriously and will only be enacted if we believe that the child presents a serious safety concern that endangers themselves and others. A serious safety/disciplinary problem is defined as one in which the Director and staff determine to be defined as:

- Inflicting physical or emotional harm on self or others
- Destroying property in a manner that could harm others
- Elopement from the group in a manner that endangers the child and fellow students
- Failing to adequately respond to an individualized behavior plan
- Exhibiting behavior that presents a serious safety concern for that child or others.
- The inability to eliminate safety concerns through reasonable modifications.

When staff feel that a child is exhibiting these dangers/safety concerns, they will begin documenting these behaviors. Communication with parents, and copies of incidents will be handed to parents physically so they can review the behavior. Steps will be made (based on staff and parent/guardian conversations) to see if behaviors and or safety concerns can be eliminated. If the Forest Friends of the KP school staff make the decision to expel, staff will review the expulsion policy with the child's parents.

During this time, staff will provide parents with a copy of the policy and provide documentation including: the date, time, staff involved and details of each incident that has led to this decision. Staff will provide the family with information about community-based resources or activities that may benefit or help the child. Once the decision has been made to expel, the school will notify DCYF with the following information: child demographics, reason for expulsion and the resources that were provided to the parent or guardian.

## **VIII. Family Involvement**

### **A. Celebrating Families**

Every child and every family that participates in our program is special and unique. We often discuss each child's family

### **Family Resources**

Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula is a branch of our larger nonprofit program Key Peninsula Preschool. The mission of our nonprofit is to bring high-quality early childhood education and childcare services to the Key Peninsula and to provide resources and support for our families. We are committed to our families and seek to connect families with resources that support their needs, create a community support network, and strengthen our community. Our organization offers the co-operative preschool, and staff to speak with if you need help/support with a specific issue. We can provide referrals and connect you with our community resources. We evaluate our programming annually to determine if we are doing our best to support our families. We welcome any feedback from our families on how we can better support you!

### **B. Child Assessments and Individualized Education Plans**

It is our goal to develop a strong and collaborative relationship with our families to create a partnership that supports your child and your family. We will use intake

information to learn more about your child's development, their cultural heritage, family norms and routines, social needs, and any behavioral concerns. Our staff will conduct developmental assessments at least twice during the school year and will create individualized educational plans that are specific to each child's strengths and developmental needs. We will hold parent teacher conferences biannually and will communicate and collaborate with parents regularly to create the best environment for each child's healthy development. As your child nears kindergarten, we will supply school readiness materials and discuss your child's needs. We will determine how to collaborate with parents to best support each child as they prepare for kindergarten.

Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula strongly believes in the importance of regular developmental screenings. We encourage families to speak to our Director, their child's pediatrician, and/or our regional Part C provider if they have any concerns about their child's development. We will be working with community partners to offer at least one Child Find event per year and will make referrals to Part C agencies if we have any developmental concerns. We encourage parents to discuss their observations, hopes, and concerns with the child's classroom teacher to create a strong partnership to support the child. We will create individualized care plans to support each of our students' unique developmental needs.

### **C. School Events, Parent Nights and Celebrations**

Our school values opportunities to connect as a community and spend time together. We will be offering various events and celebrations throughout the year, and we will keep families informed on dates and times.

### **D. Key Peninsula Preschool Community Values**

Our parent organization, Key Peninsula Preschool, places a strong emphasis on supporting our community. We seek to cultivate child, family, and community well-being. We believe in practicing the art of kindness. We assume the best of others. We strive to do the right thing even when it is hard. We ask that members of our preschool community commit themselves to our shared community values.

### **D. Problem Resolution (Resolving Family Concerns)**

Should a situation arise that involves our program, school grounds, or staff, please follow the following guidelines to have your concerns addressed:

1. If the concern can be easily resolved please direct your concerns to the most applicable staff member (lead teacher, office manager, or director).
2. If your concern is not addressed, or if your concern is a larger issue, please bring the issue to the attention of the Director. Every effort will be made to address the issues and reach a solution.
3. If your concern is not addressed and you wish to make a formal complaint, please provide a short-written explanation of the issue to our non-profit board to address

the issue. The director can provide the most current contact details to reach the board upon request.

We take concerns seriously and we always seek to resolve issues in a respectful, kind, and confidential manner. If an issue arises that needs to be discussed, we ask that this be done outside of the children's presence. We are happy to discuss any aspect of your child's development, school policies, or goings-on in the school. However, we respect our children's rights to privacy and take confidentiality very seriously. We will not discuss another child with someone who is not a parent or family member.

*\*It is important to remember that while communication is important, it is the Teachers' primary responsibility to always supervise the children. If you require more than a quick check-in with your child's teacher, please schedule a time to see them one-on-one.*

## **VIII. Liability Insurance**

We maintain liability insurance that covers student, staff, and property

## **X. Inspection reports and notices of enforcement actions**

Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula School will adhere to the RCW 43.216.689 Washington State Policy: Every child day care center, outdoor nature-based child care provider, and family day care provider shall have readily available for review by the department, parents, and the public a copy of each inspection report and notice of enforcement action received by the center or provider from the department for the past three years.

## **XI. Animal Policy**

### **A. Animals**

Forest Friends of the KP will house farm animals such as chickens, ducks, and rabbits on school property. Parents must sign an animal consent form to allow children to interact with the animals. The animals will be held within a fenced area and children will not be able to approach the fence or access these animals without adult support. Children may help provide farm animals with fresh food and water. Our school intends on increasing the number of animals, when this happens a new consent form will be administered.

## **XII. Risk Awareness and Management**

Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula encourages children to have adventures and engage in occasional risky play or learning activities. This philosophy leads us to use more

teacher observation than is typical during indoor preschool activities. In any risky play or hazardous situation children will actively supervise the children and will use on-one-one support when necessary. As an acknowledgement of the risks inherent in a forest school setting parents will be asked to sign a "risk waiver."

#### **A. Strangers or Maintenance Workers**

Staff may need to address strangers/workers to see if they need assistance to find who/what they need. Staff need to make sure that children are accounted for and that they steer clear of anyone that is not a part of the school program.

#### **C. Water Activities**

The site where Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula currently operates does not have any streams or bodies of water. If circumstances change, parents will be updated on any new risk management policies put into place.

#### **D. Emergency Weather Situations**

Staff will be proactive and review the weekly and daily forecasts and will discuss with other staff members the possibility for hazardous weather. We will attempt to let parents know if we see a potentially hazardous weather situation forecasted for our area several days in advance whenever possible. School will be canceled if:

- Wind events wherein wind speeds exceed 20 miles per hour
- Air quality due to smoke reaches unhealthy air quality status
- Outdoor temperatures exceed 92 degrees F or are lower than 24 degrees F
- The Peninsula School District Closes due to a snow event.

If hazardous weather arises while school is in session, staff will bring the students indoors in McColley Hall. Staff will monitor the hazardous weather situation and ask the students to remain in McColley Hall until the hazardous weather situation has passed. Once hazardous weather subsides, staff members and children will stay inside for an additional 15 minutes to ensure it is safe to return outdoors. If the hazardous weather situation persists for longer than 1 hour staff will contact families for an early dismissal.

#### **E. Suitable Clothing and Gear for Students**

Staff must ensure that all children are dressed properly for daily weather conditions. Please be helpful to the staff and check daily weather conditions then make sure that your child is dressed in the appropriate clothing necessary for the day. Children should dress in layers that are appropriate for the season and allows them to be comfortable in different weather conditions. Clothing should be sturdy and allow children to get dirty. Here are some clothing items to consider:

- **Base layer**

- A thin, non-scratchy layer made of soft wool, silk, or thermal material that wicks away moisture and dries quickly. This could include long johns, an undershirt, or socks.
- **Mid layer**
- An insulating layer should be provided on cold days. This can include: fleece vests or jackets, a coat, or thick sweater. These items should match current weather conditions
- **Outer layer**
- To ensure that each child stays warm and dry, Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula will provide a “Muddy Buddy” rain suit and boots during cold and wet weather. In the winter months we will provide quality rain boots. These items will remain at school and will be washed/cleaned regularly.
- **Shoes**
- Sturdy shoes with good support that are suitable for walking or hiking through rough terrain.
- **Accessories**
- A sun hat, gloves, and a fleece neck warmer can help protect children from the sun and cold. In rainy weather, rain mitts can be worn over gloves or mittens

Staff will not neglect the clothing needs for the children. Staff members will not let children stay in soaking wet clothes for extended periods of time. If a child does not have proper clothes, staff will borrow from the school bin and communicate with parents the possible options for obtaining the proper attire. We ask that you regularly check your child’s backpack to ensure that they always have an appropriate change of clothing that fits current weather conditions.

## **F. Climbing Natural Features of the Forest**

In our program, children are encouraged to interact with the fallen logs, stumps, and rocks that are in our forest. Children will be consistently monitored by staff when they balance on logs or step from stump to stump. Children will be coached to engage only in the climbing/gross motor activities that their bodies are developmentally ready to engage in. Children will never be placed or assisted in engaging in gross motor activities that they are unable to do independently. If the children are not capable of doing the activity on their own they will be coached to wait until their body is able to do the activity.

We currently do not have trees that are suitable for climbing, but if such a tree becomes accessible in our forest the tree will be clearly marked that it is available for climbing. Children must be able to climb into a marked tree on their own in order to be in it. Children will be instructed to climb high enough where a staff member can be within arms-reach of their torso.

Staff will inspect climbing features in our forest on a daily basis to ensure they have not been damaged or have any hazards. Staff will communicate with children which tree or branch is okay to climb on and which is not.

## **H. Foraging**

Children are encouraged to forage edible/useful forest plants and gather materials for natural crafts and exploration. Staff will be continuously aware of what the children are picking. Staff are knowledgeable about our local forest vegetation and will teach plant identification and will instruct students on which plants are safe to eat or use for crafting and which plants should be avoided. Staff will supervise students when they are foraging and will not allow students to interact with dangerous plant materials. If a staff member is unsure if the items are safe or may disturb the environment, staff must encourage children to leave it as is and will gain the knowledge necessary to identify the plant in future encounters. Staff are instructed not to allow children to touch or consume mushrooms and fungi.

## **G. Poisonous Items**

Staff will be aware of potential poisonous hazards that are native in our forest ecosystem. If there is a potentially poisonous encounter, staff will immediately call the poison control center, the parent/guardian, and the school Director. Staff will utilize first aid as directed by poison control.

## **H. Use of Tools**

Children will use tools from time to time to clip branches for crafting, prepare food, or create crafting items. Staff will teach the safe and appropriate use of each type of tool and will provide direct supervision when a child is using a tool. Staff will determine if a tool usage is developmentally appropriate for each child. Tools must be age appropriate for the child to use them.

## **I. Missing Children Protocol**

Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula takes the role of monitoring the whereabouts of all children very seriously. Staff are trained to scan the group and count every child every few minutes and pay extra attention to children who need more supervision. From the first week of school, we teach the children that the sound of a whistle means that they should stop and return to the teacher. Forest Classrooms are surrounded by thick brush, and it would be difficult for a child to elope in the classroom setting. Staff are trained to do a child count before and after any transition to a new area. If a child needs extra monitoring, staff will hold the child's hand during any transitions. If a child were to go missing, staff must follow these steps:

- Blow the whistle and call for the child to return
- Gather children and perform role call by using the daily attendance
- Secure one staff member to supervise remaining children
- Have any other staff and adults go search the area where the child was last seen and do a thorough sweep of the entire property
- If the child is not found staff will immediately call 911
- After calling 911 the staff will call the Director and parents

If a child attempts to purposely elope from the classroom group, staff will speak to the child individually about safety and reinforce that they must always remain with their teacher, then parents will be informed about the situation at pick-up. If purposeful elopements continue Forest Friends of the KP reserves the right to unenroll students who purposely attempt to elope due to safety concerns.

## **J. Stick Safety Policy**

Students and staff are permitted to use sticks throughout the day. Staff will help students to work toward an understanding of safe stick use by using the following practices:

Students will be reminded to notice the size of the stick they are using, using an arm measure test or height measure test.

If the stick is longer than the student's arm and/or taller than the student, students will be asked to find open spaces away from other people to use or swing the stick safely, i.e. "Big sticks, big spaces."

Students may use sticks that are longer than their arm for construction or other dramatic play tasks under close supervision of a staff member

## **K. Campfire Activities Policy**

Staff and students may participate in campfire activities within a designated fire structure designed for the express purpose of a fire. Campfires must be built according to safe fire practices, as provided by the U.S. Forest Service (<https://smokeybear.com/en/prevention-how-tos/campfire-safety>) and with permission from the Key Peninsula Lutheran Church and school Director. Forest Friends of the KP will have signed written permission for campfire activities from each child's parent or guardian in the form of a risk waiver.

Teachers must use developmentally appropriate teaching practices to ensure children understand safe behavior around a campfire, prior to any campfire activity. Each class may have only one campfire activity at a time and must have a method of putting out a fire, such as a bucket of water or sand and must have a first aid kit nearby. Staff must create a boundary around a campfire pit/structure, such as a line of sticks or log seating, that:

- Ensure children remain at least 3 feet away from the edge of the fire pit.
- Ensure adults can easily walk between the fire pit and children; and
- Remains clear of tripping hazards such as bags or other materials.
- If creating a seating area, make sure that chairs or seating logs have an emergency escape route between them.

A one-to-one (1:1) staff-to-child ratio must be met for any child engaging with the fire directly, such as by adding kindling or logs, and the staff member must remain within arms' reach of that child. Children wearing highly flammable clothing must not be allowed to attend the fire, and adults and children should be reminded to tie back long hair and secure loose clothing to reduce the risk of it catching fire.

While a campfire is burning and until after it is cool, staff must remain near enough to the fire to respond to any fire-tending needs and to prevent children from accessing the fire, if necessary. Running and pushing must not be tolerated within 6 feet of the edge of the fire.

## **L. Encountering Wildlife**

Children may encounter wildlife. Children are encouraged to remain calm when wildlife is spotted. Staff will act quickly to ensure the safety of the children. If the scene is safe, staff will encourage children to stay still, quiet, and observe. If the scene is unsafe and children need to be moved to a safe area, staff will do so calmly and swiftly. Staff will always be situated between the children and animals when encountering wildlife.

# **XIII. Hygiene & Illness Prevention in the Forest**

## **A. Toileting**

For toileting we will take bathroom breaks and bring the children in to use the restrooms in McColley Hall on a regular schedule. If a child needs to use the restroom between bathroom breaks, we will have a compostable toilet in a privacy tent that children can use. We understand that every child develops at their own pace, and we are happy to assist children with toilet training. Since we are conducting school in a forest setting, if your child is not yet toilet trained, we ask that you send them in a pull-up so they can practice going potty during classroom bathroom breaks. If a child has a wet or soiled diaper staff will use a stand-up diaper changing procedure. Please provide at least 5 pull-ups and wipes in the child's backpack every day.

During bathroom breaks (both indoors and in the forest compostable toilet) we ask staff members to place themselves in a position where the bathroom can be supervised. We ask that at least two staff are present to accompany students to McColley Hall during group bathroom breaks. Staff members will be aware of who leaves to use the restroom and when the child has rejoined the group.

## **B. Hand Washing**

Children are to use both indoor and outdoor hand washing facilities before and after meals, after using the restroom, after outdoor activities, and after any animal encounters. Children may need assistance with the foot pump to activate the sink or may need assistance climbing onto the stepstool.

## **C. Dental Hygiene**

Dental hygiene will be conducted using the Tooth Brushing Procedure below:

- Children will have the opportunity to brush their teeth after lunch, before rest time.

- Parents will have a form with the option to opt in or opt out of the dental hygiene program.
- Each child will have their own toothbrush, marked with their name. Each child's toothbrush will be stored in their sanitary kit, which they will put into their backpack every morning before going into the forest. No sharing or borrowing of toothbrushes will be allowed.
- Following use, toothbrushes will be separately air dried before being returned to individual toothbrush containers.
- Toothbrushes will be protected from dirt and cross contamination by being placed in individual carrying cases which will be kept in each child's
- Storage containers will be cleaned once a week with mild soap and hot water. Toothbrushes will remain separated and not allowed to contact one another during this cleaning.
- Toothbrushes will never be decontaminated. We will not use bleach or disinfectants on toothbrushes. If a toothbrush becomes contaminated through contact with another brush or use by another child, it will be thrown away and replaced with a new one.
- Toothbrushes will be replaced when the bristles are flattened or splayed. Depending on the wear, brushes will be replaced about every three to five months.

#### **D. Prevention of Bloodborne Illnesses**

Even healthy people can spread infection through direct contact with body fluids. Body fluids include blood, urine, stool (feces), drool (saliva), vomit, drainage from sores/rashes (pus), etc. All body fluids may be infected with contagious disease. Nonporous gloves are always used when blood or wound drainage is present. To limit risk associated with potentially infectious blood/body fluids, the following precautions are always taken:

1. Any open cuts or sores on children or staff are kept covered.
2. Whenever a child or staff comes into contact with any body fluids, the exposed area is washed immediately with soap and warm water, rinsed, and dried with paper towels.
3. All surfaces in contact with body fluids are cleaned immediately with soap and water, rinsed, and disinfected with an agent such as bleach in the concentration used for disinfecting body fluids (1/4 cup bleach per gallon of water or 1 Tablespoon/quart).
4. Gloves and paper towels or other material used to wipe up body fluids are put in a plastic bag, tied closed, and placed in a covered waste container. Any brushes, brooms, dustpans, mops, etc. used to clean-up body fluids are washed in soap and water or detergent, rinsed, and soaked in a disinfecting solution for at least 2 minutes and air dried. Machine washable items, such as mop heads, are washed with hot water and soap in the washing machine. All items are hung off the floor or ground to dry. Equipment used for cleaning is stored safely out of children's reach in an area ventilated to the outside.

5. A child's clothes soiled with body fluids are put into a closed plastic bag and sent home with the child's parent/guardian. A change of clothing is available for children in care, as well as for staff.
6. Hands are always washed after handling soiled laundry or equipment, and after removing gloves. Blood Contact or Exposure When a staff person or child comes into contact with blood (e.g. staff provides first aid for a child who is bleeding) or is exposed to blood (e.g. blood from one person enters the cut or mucous membrane of another person), the staff person informs the director immediately.

## **Parent Signatures**

Acknowledgement of Receipt of Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula School Parent Handbook for the enrollment of: \_\_\_\_\_ (Child's Name).

I/We have received a copy of Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula Parent Handbook and have read all policies. I/we agree to follow and abide by the Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula School Parent Handbook's policies.

Parent Signature Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I will speak with the director If there is anything Forest Friends of the Key Peninsula School needs to know that would help us care for your child, including any special needs:

Parent Signature Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_