

MIGHTY ROOTS ACADEMY



It's Fall Y'all!

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mighty roots academy

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Welcome!

As the world transforms with the changing leaves and the whisper of autumn breezes, we are excited to embark on a new season of learning and growth together!

At Mighty Roots Academy, we believe that education is a journey, not a destination. Our mission is to provide you with the tools, inspiration, and support to make this journey enriching, enjoyable, and deeply rewarding. As we enter the fall season, we are reminded of the immense possibilities that lie ahead.

Our team has poured their hearts and expertise into crafting this issue, and we hope you find it to be a valuable resource that enhances your homeschooling experience. We look forward to sharing this exciting season of learning with you and your family!

A Message from our Director

As the Director of Mighty Roots Academy, I am thrilled to welcome you to the Fall 2023 edition of our magazine! The fall season is a time of transformation. It is also a season of growth and learning and it is our hope that this magazine will be a source of inspiration and insight.

In this issue, you will find a collection of articles, stories, and artwork that showcase the incredible talent, creativity and dedication of our students and Learning Guides. The world is full of opportunities waiting to be explored, and Mighty Roots Academy is here to help provide the knowledge, support and encouragement needed to thrive!

Wishing you all a wonderful fall season filled with learning, growth, and joy!

~ Tracy Schroeder





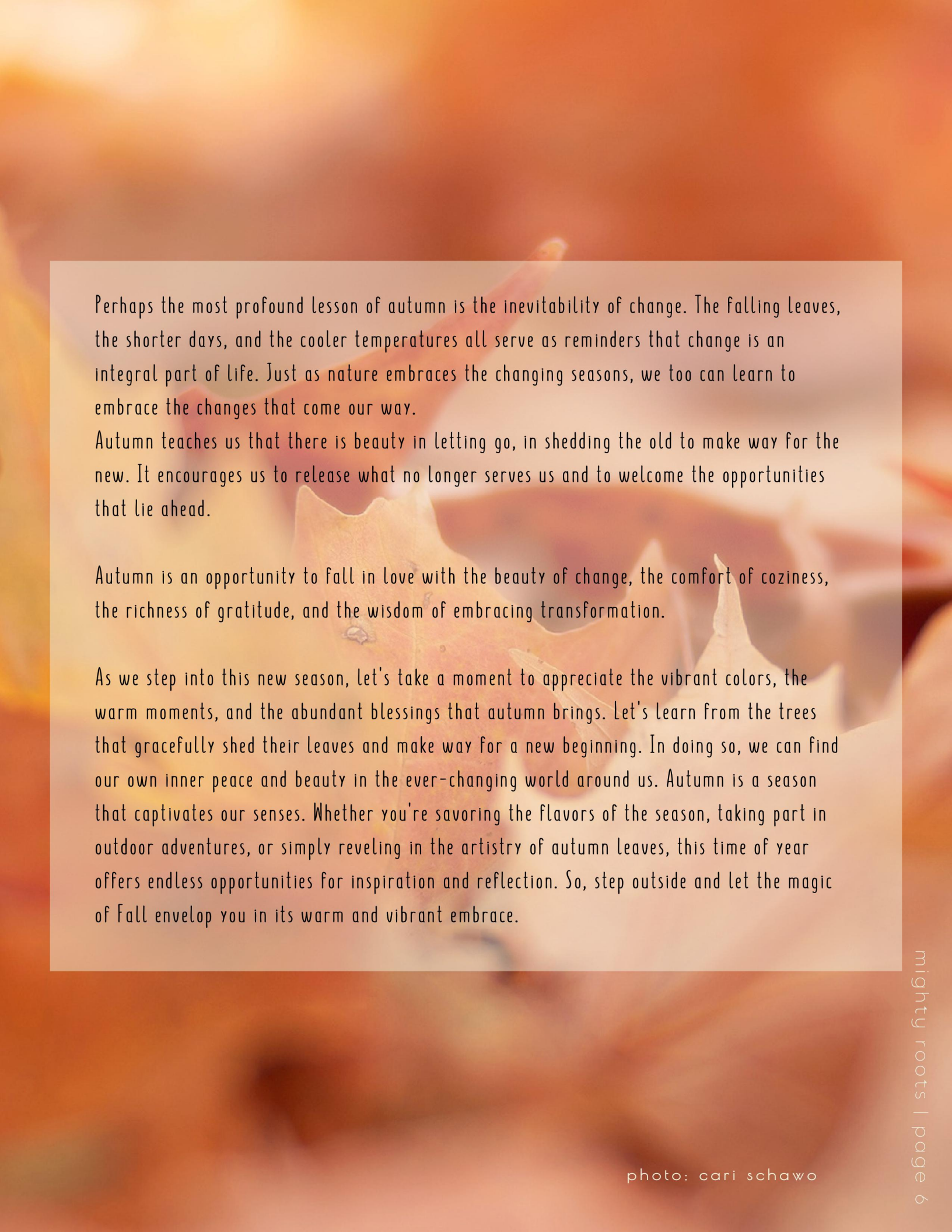
Falling into Autumn

As the hot days of summer slowly give way to the cool, crisp embrace of autumn, there is an undeniable sense of transformation in the air. The world outside undergoes a stunning metamorphosis, as leaves change their colors, and the days grow shorter. "Falling into Autumn" is not just a transition in seasons; it is a transition in perspective, a time for reflection, and an opportunity to embrace the beauty that lies within this remarkable time of year.

It's a time to dig out those warm sweaters, scarves, and fuzzy socks and to savor a steaming cup of cocoa or a comforting bowl of soup. There's something undeniably comforting about the aroma of freshly baked apple pies and the crackling sound of a wood-burning fireplace.

In this season, people often seek solace in the warmth and comfort of their homes, surrounded by the people they love. It's a time to slow down, appreciate life's simple pleasures, and relish in the feeling of being snug and secure.

photo: cari schawo



Perhaps the most profound lesson of autumn is the inevitability of change. The falling leaves, the shorter days, and the cooler temperatures all serve as reminders that change is an integral part of life. Just as nature embraces the changing seasons, we too can learn to embrace the changes that come our way.

Autumn teaches us that there is beauty in letting go, in shedding the old to make way for the new. It encourages us to release what no longer serves us and to welcome the opportunities that lie ahead.

Autumn is an opportunity to fall in love with the beauty of change, the comfort of coziness, the richness of gratitude, and the wisdom of embracing transformation.

As we step into this new season, let's take a moment to appreciate the vibrant colors, the warm moments, and the abundant blessings that autumn brings. Let's learn from the trees that gracefully shed their leaves and make way for a new beginning. In doing so, we can find our own inner peace and beauty in the ever-changing world around us. Autumn is a season that captivates our senses. Whether you're savoring the flavors of the season, taking part in outdoor adventures, or simply reveling in the artistry of autumn leaves, this time of year offers endless opportunities for inspiration and reflection. So, step outside and let the magic of Fall envelop you in its warm and vibrant embrace.



AND WE'RE OFF!

It's that time of year again – the days are growing shorter and the air carries with it the subtle hint of autumn. Families across the country have geared up for a time-honored tradition: the start of a new school year. For homeschooling families, this season is no different. It marks the beginning of a fresh journey filled with boundless opportunities for learning, growth, and exploration. It's a journey that prioritizes curiosity, and a love for learning. It's a journey where the classroom knows no bounds, and the possibilities are limitless. At Mighty Roots Academy, we are ready to embrace the beauty of a new year and look forward to each day as a new opportunity to discover the world and ourselves!

Excitement is in the air here at Mighty Roots and we are excited for a new year with our students!

Every year brings new experiences, discoveries and growth for not only the students but for the staff here as well. Adventure awaits us and we look forward to this journey together!





At Mighty Roots Academy, we encourage curiosity through the discovery of the natural world around us, exploring history through immersive projects, nurturing a love for the arts and allowing our students to dive deep into what truly excites them.

Encouraging curiosity not only makes learning more enjoyable but also fosters a lifelong love for knowledge. It's the spark that ignites creativity and fuels the desire to keep asking questions.



photo: cari schawo



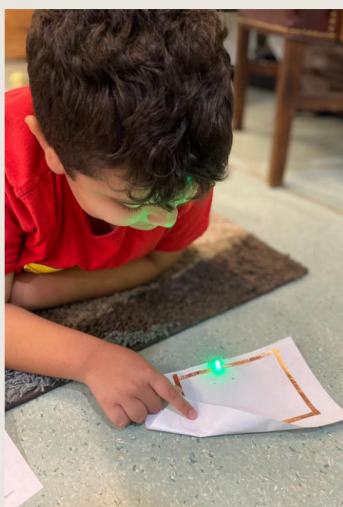
photo: cari schawo



In the coming months, as lessons are learned, challenges are faced, and milestones are achieved, we will continue to discover the countless benefits of our educational approach here at Mighty Roots.



So, with backpacks full of curiosity and hearts brimming with excitement, we set forth on this new year of adventures, eager to see where it will lead us!





"The trees
are about to
show us how
lovely it is to
let things
go."

– Unknown

Fall into Flavor

COMFORT FOODS FOR
COZY AUTUMN DAYS



As the days grow shorter, the leaves begin to change their colors and a crispness fills the air, there's no denying that fall is upon us. This season beckons us to slow down, savor the moment, and indulge in the warm and hearty flavors that brings a sense of comfort and nostalgia. Whether you're gathered around the dinner table with loved ones or enjoying a quiet evening by the fire, these dishes will wrap you in a cozy embrace and remind you of the beauty of autumn. So, go ahead and embrace the flavors of the season, and let these recipes fill your home with warmth and happiness.

Pumpkin Soup:

Ingredients:

- 2 cups pumpkin puree
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 cups vegetable or chicken broth
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. In a large pot, sauté the onion and garlic in butter until soft.
2. Add the pumpkin puree, broth, and cinnamon. Simmer for 15-20 minutes.
3. Use an immersion blender to puree the soup until smooth.
4. Stir in the heavy cream and season with salt and pepper. Heat through and serve.



Butternut Squash and Sage Risotto:

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups Arborio rice
- 4 cups chicken or vegetable broth
- 2 cups butternut squash, diced
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 2 tbsp fresh sage, chopped
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. In a large pot, sauté the onion and garlic until translucent.
2. Add the Arborio rice and cook for a few minutes until it becomes translucent around the edges.
3. Pour in the white wine and stir until it's mostly absorbed.
4. Begin adding the broth, one ladleful at a time, stirring constantly and allowing the liquid to be absorbed before adding more.
5. After about 15 minutes, add the diced butternut squash and continue cooking until the rice is creamy and the squash is tender.
6. Stir in the chopped sage and grated Parmesan cheese. Season with salt and pepper. Serve hot.





Chicken and Mushroom Pot Pie:

Ingredients:

- 2 cups cooked chicken, shredded
- 2 cups mushrooms, sliced
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 tbsp butter
- 2 tbsp flour
- 1 package refrigerated pie crusts
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. In a large skillet, melt the butter and sauté the onions and garlic until soft.
2. Add the mushrooms and cook until they release their moisture.
3. Stir in the flour, then gradually add the chicken broth and heavy cream, stirring until the mixture thickens.
4. Add the chicken, peas, salt, and pepper.
5. Pour the mixture into a pie dish and cover with a rolled-out pie crust.
6. Bake at 375°F (190°C) for 30-35 minutes or until the crust is golden brown.

Apple Crisp:

Ingredients:

- 6 cups sliced apples (Granny Smith or Honeycrisp)
- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup cold butter, diced
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- Vanilla ice cream (optional, for serving)



Instructions:

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C).
2. Place the sliced apples in a greased baking dish.
3. In a separate bowl, combine the rolled oats, flour, brown sugar, butter, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Mix until it resembles coarse crumbs.
4. Sprinkle the oat mixture evenly over the apples.
5. Bake for 40-45 minutes, or until the topping is golden brown, and the apples are tender.
6. Serve warm, topped with a scoop of vanilla ice cream for an extra treat.

Caramel Apple Dip:

Ingredients:

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup caramel sauce
- Sliced apples for dipping



Instructions:

1. In a mixing bowl, beat the softened cream cheese, brown sugar, granulated sugar, and vanilla extract until smooth.
2. Spread the mixture onto a serving plate or dish.
3. Drizzle caramel sauce over the cream cheese mixture.
4. Serve with sliced apples for dipping.





“I’m so glad I live in a world
where there are Octobers.”

— L.M. Montgomery,
“Anne of Green Gables”

From Forest to HOME

Fall is a great time for crafting with kids!

Outdoors, there are plenty of natural materials and seasonal themes to inspire creativity. Here are some fun and easy fall craft ideas for kids:



^ Pinecone Creatures: Gather pinecones and let kids turn them into animals or creatures using craft supplies like googly eyes, pipe cleaners, and paint.



< Mason Jar Lanterns: Paint mason jars in fall colors, add a tea light candle, and you have beautiful lanterns that can light up your evenings.



◀ **Fall Themed Bracelets:**
Make bracelets using fall-themed beads, such as tiny pumpkins, leaves, and acorns.

Autumn Inspired Bookmarks ▶
Cut out fall shapes like pumpkins, leaves, or apples from colored paper. Laminate them and add a ribbon for a cute and useful fall-themed bookmark.



◀ **Gourd Creatures:**
Decorate small gourds with paint, googly eyes, and pipe cleaners to transform them into imaginative creatures.



INTO THE WOODS WE GO!

Unlocking Nature's Classroom: Mighty Roots Academy Forest School

Nature has always been a captivating teacher, offering lessons in resilience, curiosity, and wonder. In an age dominated by screens and concrete, the Forest School movement has emerged as a beacon of holistic education, inviting children to step out of their comfort zones and into the enchanting embrace of the natural world. "Into the woods we go" is not just a phrase but an invitation to embark on a journey of discovery, where classrooms have no walls, and the curriculum is written by the forest itself (with a little help from our Learning Guides).

One of the fundamental principles of Forest School is that the forest becomes the primary classroom. Instead of sitting inside at desks, students explore the natural world around them. This immersive experience encourages them to ask questions, make observations, and engage in activities that foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity.



In the forest, learning is hands-on and experiential. Children might build shelters, identify different plant species, track animal footprints, or even create natural art installations. These activities not only develop practical skills but also instill a sense of responsibility and stewardship towards the environment.

In today's technology-driven world, many children are becoming increasingly disconnected from nature. Forest School aims to reverse this trend by fostering a deep and meaningful connection with the natural world. Spending time in the forest allows children to appreciate the beauty of nature and develop a sense of wonder and awe that can stay with them throughout their lives.

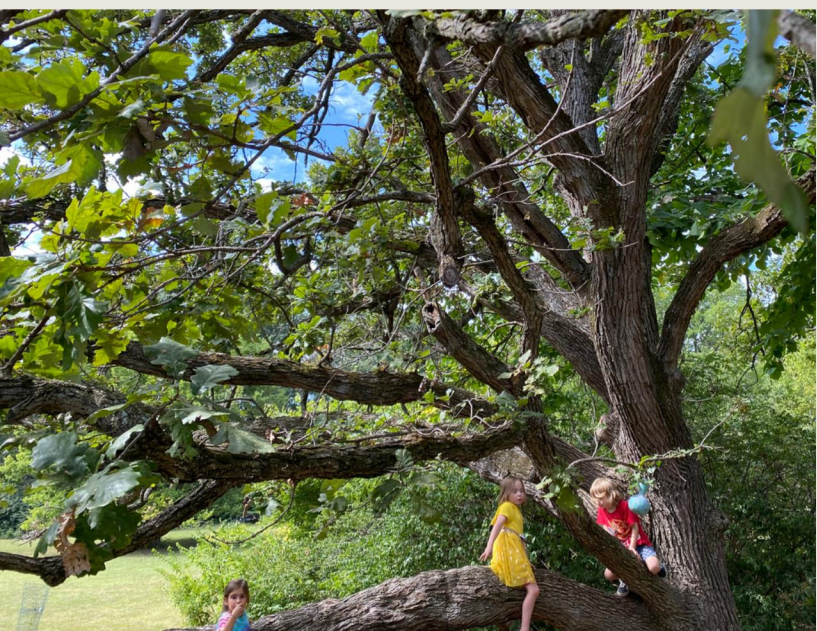
Working together in the forest promotes collaboration, communication, and empathy. Students learn to listen to one another, share ideas, and solve problems as a team. These social skills are not only important for academic success but also for building strong, supportive relationships in the future.





By blending reading, writing and math activities into imaginative play and engaging activities, Forest School reimagines learning. Forest School embraces the natural world as a classroom and nurtures the growth of resilient, independent, and environmentally conscious individuals.

In a society that often prioritizes screens over green, Forest School offers a refreshing reminder that some of life's most valuable lessons can only be learned by stepping outside and immersing oneself in the wonders of the forest.



bringing Forest School home

TIPS TO BRING FOREST SCHOOL
HOME TO YOU THIS FALL

by tracy schroeder and renee bichel



1. Go on a quest to find the most beautiful autumn leaf! This could be as elaborate or as simple as you choose. Children can organize their findings by color, shape, and size. Family members can vote on their favorite leaves. Press the winners in wax paper to keep forever.



2. Recycle a plastic bottle of any size by filling it with evergreen branches and other nature finds (like pinecones or juniper berries). Add water and glitter and you have an easy, original snowglobe-like craft that little ones will LOVE!



3. Find rocks and make patterns with them on the ground. Stacking them in groups of 2, 5, or 10 will build up math skills. My favorite thing is to create math equations with the rocks (ex. "If we take 6 rocks away from 10 rocks, how many are left?"). If ready for multiplication practice, make multiple groups of the same amount (ex. 5 groups of 4 is $5 \times 4 = 20$).





4. Watercolor or sketch a spot in your yard or at a local park (look for fall foliage!).

Have your student write either a personal essay about how looking at that spot makes them feel, or an original story with the specific spot as the main location.



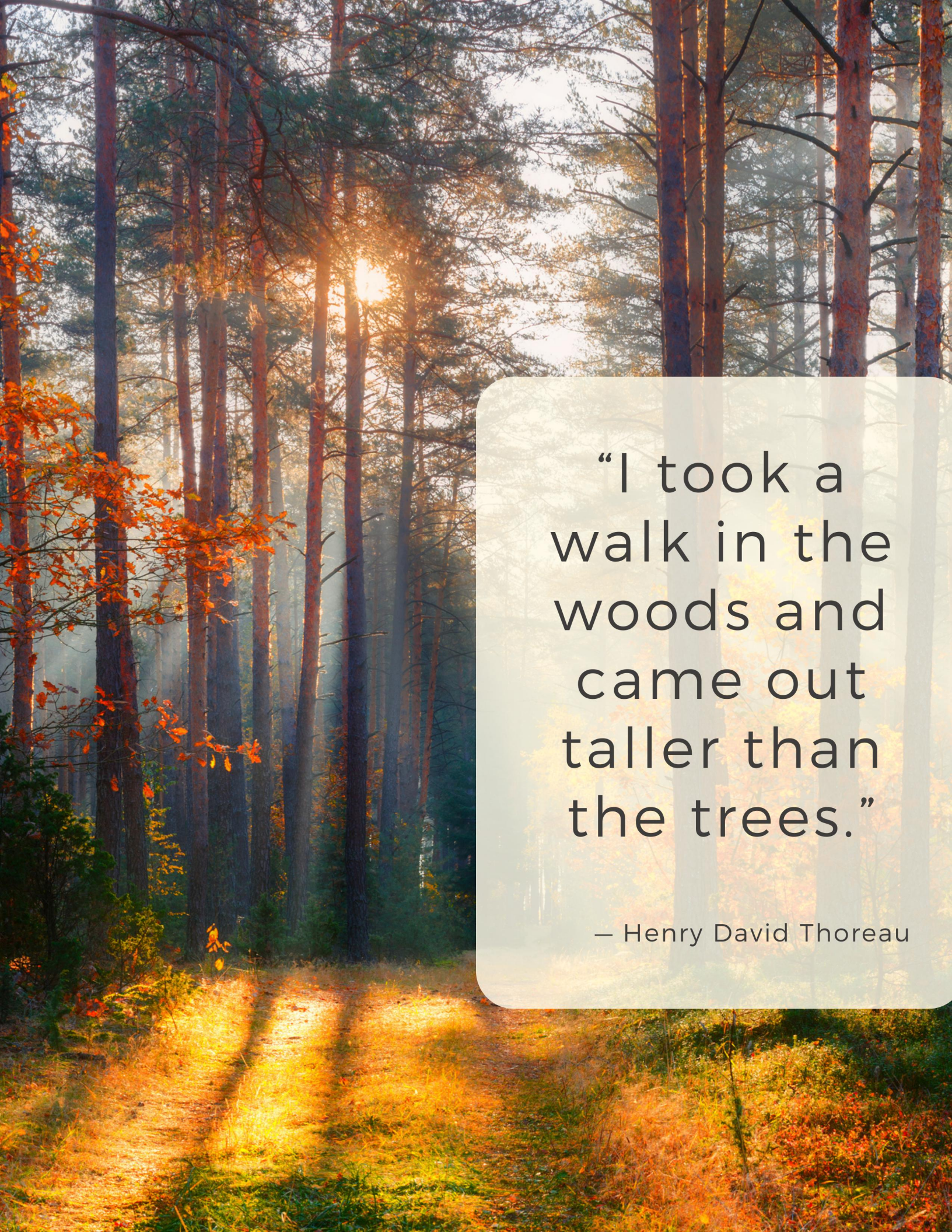
5. Grab a notebook and go on a word walk. As you walk, write down words of things that you see. You can use a theme like autumn, a color, things that move, 2 or 3 syllable words, exc. After the walk, have your student write sentences or a short story incorporating as many of the words from the word walk as they can. This encourages students to write down more words as they walk providing them more words to choose from. Encourage them to think of creative ways to incorporate multiple words into the same sentence.



6. Take nature notes by making fun notecards, paper, or dry erase boards with leaves. Collect a variety of leaves that are different shapes, colors, and sizes. Leaves that are still pliable is preferred, so it is best if you can gather them as they are freshly fallen or right from the tree branch. You can write directly on the leaf or laminate it for multiple uses.

If you want to make full size pieces of paper, try applying glue from a glue stick to paper, then press the leaves on the paper. Using clear contact paper or a laminator machine, laminate the leaf paper. Students can then write on it with a sharpie for a permanent creation or use a dry/wet erase marker for reusable fall fun.



A photograph of a forest path. The path is covered in fallen leaves and grass, leading through a dense forest of tall, thin trees. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating a warm, golden glow. The trees are mostly evergreens, but some have turned orange and yellow, suggesting autumn. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

“I took a
walk in the
woods and
came out
taller than
the trees.”

– Henry David Thoreau

MEET OUR LEARNING GUIDE

STEPHANIE GRAEBER



Art has the remarkable ability to capture the essence of the human experience. Behind every stroke of the brush, every splash of color, and every piece of art lies a passionate artist who serves as a guiding light for aspiring creators. In this article, we will meet Stephanie Graeber, a dedicated and inspiring learning guide here at Mighty Roots Academy whose expertise has ignited the creative flames in many of our students. Stephanie joined our team in August of 2022 and leads most of our art courses. We are honored to have her with us!

What inspired you to get into art?

I have always loved art since I was a child. In high school, I took every art class I could fit into my schedule, especially drawing and painting. After high school, I continued practicing art through classes at the Lawrence Arts Center, where figure drawing was my favorite. When I got married and had children, my passion for art fell to the wayside for several years, until my middle daughter, Lila, started showing a passion and talent for art. I started making art with her again and when we decided she would homeschool, I started teaching art for our homeschool group, which is how I realized I really love teaching art to kids!

How did you find out about Mighty Roots?

I learned about Mighty Roots through a friend's Facebook post! She shared a post that Mighty Roots was looking for an art teacher. When I realized that Mighty Roots was just 10 minutes from my house, my interest was piqued! Once I visited Mighty Roots, I knew it would be a great fit for both myself and my children.

(continued)

What do you love best about teaching at Mighty Roots?

This is a really hard question to answer! I love the students and my co-workers. I also love having more time in the classroom, which allows me to teach concepts and techniques in depth.

What drew you or got you into homeschooling?

I call myself an accidental homeschooler. I love the idea of public education, but it didn't turn out to be a good fit for my children. All of my children are neurodivergent in different ways and my oldest daughter struggled in public Kindergarten because she was bored. Eventually, when we decided to withdraw from public school and homeschool we saw a drastic improvement in her mood and mental health and I finally had a child who was thriving. We still consider what is best for each child and for us as parents and make schooling decisions on a year by year basis. For this reason, we are also what I like to call a "blended schooling" family. Each year has looked different for us, with some children homeschooling and some attending brick and mortar schools.

What are some challenges you find with homeschooling?

I personally find it very challenging to homeschool more than one child at a time!



What is one piece of advice you would give to a family just starting out on their homeschooling journey?

Don't try to do it yourself! In other words, find a community. Whether that is through a drop off program like Mighty Roots, a large homeschool co-op, or even a small group co-op with a few other families, homeschooling is much easier and more fun when you can do it with friends.

“I’VE BEEN ABSOLUTELY TERRIFIED EVERY MOMENT OF MY LIFE AND I’VE NEVER LET IT KEEP ME FROM A SINGLE THING THAT I WANTED TO DO.”

-Georgia O’Keeffe



Embracing her mistake: Stephanie fixes a glaze mistake on a piece of pottery.

Any advice you want to offer to someone interested in art?

Art is a learned skill! It's sort of like playing an instrument. You can't pick up a guitar and play it perfectly on your first try. You have to learn the basics and practice! Art is the same way...the more you practice the better you get!

In class, we talk a lot about the habits that good artists develop, but one I emphasize is that artists learn how to stretch and explore, which includes trying things that seem difficult and challenge us, experimenting with new ideas and ways of working, and most importantly, learning from and even embracing our "mistakes."



Stephanie has a bachelors degree in Spanish & Linguistics as well as a Masters in Social Work from KU. She lives in south KC with her husband, three children, two rescue cats, two rabbits and a leopard gecko.



Autumn's dance

by tracy schroeder

The Foundations of Movement: Vestibular and Proprioceptive Development in Children

Fall is a season for the senses. We **see** the changing colors of the leaves. We **feel** the fresh, crisp air of a morning. We **hear** those fallen leaves crunch under our feet. We **smell** and **taste** all things related to apple cider and pumpkin spice. What if I were to tell you that we have two other very important senses that we should make sure get plenty of stimulation this fall as well? And that these two senses are the two most important senses to connect our bodies to our brains! Feeling curious? Let's explore it together.

Does your child love to swing, spin, sway, and flip upside down on the couch? That's great! They are feeding their body and brain's need for vestibular input.



Vestibular sense is our sense of balance and movement. When the fluid in our ears moves across the tiny hair cells in our ears, our body and brain are communicating. So, when your child wants to twirl, twist, shake, and roll all over the ground it is because their brain is craving vestibular input from the body.

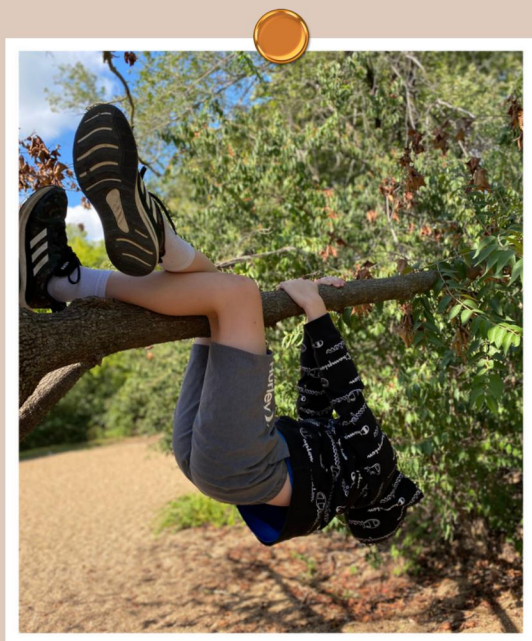
photo: cari schawo



A properly developed vestibular system is what allows a person to shift their weight to keep from falling, know when they need to speed up or slow down, and keeps one from getting disoriented when turning quickly to go after a ball in sports.



Our vestibular sense is also closely related to our proprioceptive sense. Think of the proprioceptive sense as body awareness. This is what allows us to reach down and touch our knee without looking. It is what helps a person pick up a water bottle without fumbling around for it and apply the right amount of pressure to a crayon to color without snapping it in half.



Proprioception is detected by receptors in our muscles, tendons, and skin. Those receptors tell our brain where our body parts are in space. A lack of good proprioceptive sense can look like clumsiness. The proprioceptive system has an extremely important role in sensory processing because it assists in controlling responses to sensory stimulation. Indicators that someone's body is seeking proprioceptive input include: biting and chewing objects, excessive roughness, throwing themselves heavily on the floor, sitting with knees tucked under themselves, banging body parts together or bending joints like the fingers or knees backwards.

Here are some great ways to make sure your child and even you are getting the vestibular and proprioceptive input needs for proper development and wellness no matter a person's age.

Vestibular input:

- Climb trees
- Hang upside down on playsets and swings
- Spin and twirl
- Roll on the floor or down a hill
- Do summersaults, cartwheels, or gymnastics activities
- Watch TV, read, or do schoolwork flipped upside down on the couch.
- Swing and even let them twist the swing up to spin in circles
- Dance
- Rock back and forth or sway to music
- Shake or nod their head really fast
- Spin in a swivel office/computer chair
- Jump from rock to rock, log to log, or over obstacles
- Roll around in the leaves

Proprioceptive input:

- Giant bear hugs
- Lift heavy things like rocks, logs, big books, boxes, exc
- Climb trees
- Ride bikes and scooters
- Weight bearing activities like push-ups or crawling
- Running, jumping, jumping rope, or jumping on a trampoline
- Chewing gum or foods that take time to chew up like fresh vegetables
- Blowing bubbles
- Climb up slides, ladders, and poles on playsets
- Use weighted blankets or stuffed animals when resting
- Jump in puddles
- Rake leaves





“Never jump in a pile of leaves
with a wet sucker.”

-Linus
“It’s the Great Pumpkin,
Charlie Brown”

THOUGHTS FROM A HOMESCHOOLER

Words and photos by: Jenni Mullinix

Motherhood is a blessed sacrifice of time and energy. Add homeschooling to the mix and you surrender even more. While most of us happily give up many things for the benefit of our children, finding the necessary balance between caring for ourselves and our families can often be difficult.



Mother Culture, according to Karen Andreola, is “the skillful art with which a mother looks after the ways of her household and herself.” In the words of Charlotte Mason, “If mothers could learn to do for themselves, what they do for their children... we would have happier households.”



I think mother culture and self care are very similar. For me, that means nourishing myself spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally. Taking time to do this—even if it’s just for a few minutes—can make such a difference in the atmosphere of my heart and our home.



(Continued)



Some of the most meaningful activities for me include:

- Praying and reading the Bible daily
- Reading books (I try for at least one fiction and one non-fiction book a month)
- Studying new information or learning a new skill
- Listening to podcasts
- Spending time in nature (preferably walking or hiking)
- Eating healthy meals most days and taking vitamins/supplements regularly.
- Getting together with friends for adult conversations (usually as a playdate with kiddos) and/or texting to stay in touch.
- Taking photos and interacting with like-minded moms on Instagram
- Resting or napping when I need to (which is quite often right now!)
- Spending a few quiet moments sipping hot tea or cold lemonade, depending on the weather



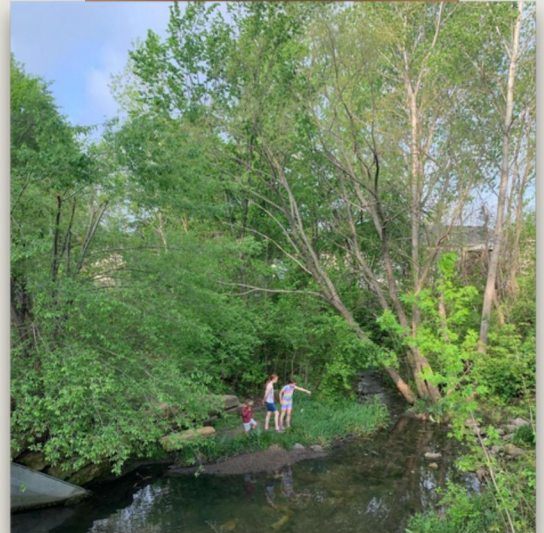
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You may find other activities to be rejuvenating, but discovering a few ways to renew your mental and physical energy on a consistent basis is important. Taking time for this is not selfish. Ultimately, it benefits the entire family.

Homeschooling is a rewarding, but sometimes exhausting, calling. Let's make sure we take care of ourselves, so we can thrive—not just survive—as homeschool moms.



— o o o —
Jenni is a homeschool mama of four kiddos—from tween to toddler. Her family has attended MRA since 2020. You can find her on Instagram at [@jennimullinix](https://www.instagram.com/jennimullinix), where she shares encouragement for homeschool moms.



PARTNER WITH US!

In an ever-evolving educational landscape, Mighty Roots Academy strives to be a beacon of hope for local families seeking flexible and personalized learning experiences. We provide an alternative to traditional schooling, allowing parents and students to tailor their education to their specific needs and interests. To continue supporting these invaluable resources, it's crucial for us to find those who will partner with us and help Mighty Roots Academy to continue to thrive.

Partnering with us can be a mutually beneficial endeavor. Here's how you can establish a meaningful partnership:

- **Financial Support:** Consider providing financial assistance to our academy to help us maintain and expand our programs. Your donation could fund scholarships, curriculum development, or the purchase of essential resources.
- **Volunteer Opportunities:** Offer your time and expertise as a volunteer.
- **In-Kind Donations:** If you have access to resources or services that can benefit Mighty Roots Academy, consider making in-kind donations. This could include technology, craft supplies, or other educational materials and resources.



Conclusion

By donating to and partnering with Mighty Roots Academy, you can contribute to a brighter educational future for students and strengthen the communities in which they thrive. Your support will not only enable us to continue our vital work but also help shape the next generation of lifelong learners by empowering students to reach their full potential through tailored learning experiences. Together, we can make a meaningful impact on the world of education!



photo: cari schawo

Autumn is a season that invites us to reflect on the passing year, to take stock of our lives, and to prepare for the colder, quieter months ahead. Just as trees release their leaves in preparation for winter, we, too, can shed the burdens and distractions that no longer serve us, allowing space for personal growth and renewal.

It is a season that captivates the senses and touches the soul. It's a time when the world transforms into a masterpiece of color and aroma, and when the simple pleasures of life take center stage. So, as you savor your slice of pumpkin pie, breathe in the crisp autumn air, and gaze at the starlit skies, remember to embrace the beauty and wonder of this enchanting season!

Our Mission

The mission of Mighty Roots Academy is to provide active, multiage learning in a nature-rich environment.

Our Philosophy

At Mighty Roots Academy, we believe it is most important to develop the skills of independent learning that equip students for a lifetime of inquiry and growth. A true education builds the skills needed for becoming a lifelong learner. We believe that students benefit most when skill-building is the focus, no matter the subject.



Mighty Roots Academy

mightyrootsacademy.com