

Field, Farm & Forest

Family Handbook

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FFF Mission Field, Farm and Forest is a 501-3c nature education non-profit which began as a recreational program in 2013. Our Mission is to cultivate curiosity, community, and nature connection in the Northeast Kingdom. Over the years, we have accomplished this through our Kinglets program and other programs for various aged children and adults, as well as seasonal festivals and summer camps.

"Kinglets" Kinglets is a nature- and play-immersion licensed childcare program for children ages 3 to 6. It is inspired by the "Waldkindergarten" or "Forest Kindergarten" model, which began in Europe and has gained popularity in recent years throughout the US. Our approach is to immerse children in nature by being outside during the majority of the day. Through outdoor play, children learn to move their bodies, use their imagination, satisfy their curiosity, gain confidence, overcome fears, build friendships and develop a connection to nature.

Back in 2013, we chose to call our youngest group of FFF kids the "Kinglets" because, like the golden-crowned kinglets that reside here in VT all year, they are small but tough, flashy, and adorable! As Bernd Heinrich wrote in his book "Winter World": *"I do not and cannot ever know the combination of happiness, hunger, or emotions that energize a bird. But whenever I've watched kinglets in their non stop hopping, hovering and searching, seen their intimate expressions, and heard their constant chatter of tsees, songs, and various calls, I've felt an infectious hyper-enthusiasm flow from them, and sensed a grand, boundless zest for life. They could not survive without that in their harsh world. Like us, they are programmed for optimism."*

Program Philosophy We believe that children are their own best leaders in their learning, and by allowing them to explore their natural environment, their inherent curiosity creates organic opportunities for learning. In recent years, an increasing amount of research has shown that play is the work of childhood and that it is the most effective way for children to boost their cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and sensory development. We believe all children deserve an “authentic childhood” which includes plenty of self-directed play and time outdoors without time constraints or teacher-driven plans. Our teachers’ role is to facilitate this natural inclination for learning. We do this by creating a safe, enriching and engaging natural learning space. We follow the children as they explore, allowing for and expecting differences in development and learning styles for different children in the same age group. As the children show interest and aptitude in different areas (like reading, math, writing, art and science concepts), we bring in materials and guidance to help the child extend their skills. We also strive for a shared experience to create a supportive and collaborative community of learners. Learning occurs organically and our ‘curriculum’ is an emergent one, following the interests of the child. Children leave our program each day feeling fulfilled, joyful, appreciated, respected, and, very likely, dirty!

Behavior Plan Our children will begin each session gaining a sense of belonging as they bond with and get to know each other. Through circle time, meals, and group activities, they will gain a sense of safety and confidence. Based on the principles of Responsive Classroom, each teacher will create behavior expectations with the children and review them often—focusing on the positive behaviors we all want to see and why they are important. The “Golden Rule,” or “treat others the way you want to be treated” will be the guiding principle for all children in our program. Specific behaviors like using kind words, asking before taking a toy from others, walking inside and staying behind a teacher outside will be practiced, modeled by staff and reinforced.

At the beginning of each session (and as-needed throughout the year), appropriate behaviors will be reviewed using role play, stories, songs and lots of practice. During outside time (in the play yard or on field trips around the center), we will circle up with students at the beginning and end of our outside time to review any additional safety rules and expectations with them.

Children who have difficulty following the expectations, or children who hurt others (verbally or physically), will have a staff member guide them in practicing appropriate behaviors. This might include making amends or apologizing to another student. If a child's behavior interferes with the learning or safety of other children, our staff will work on a plan with that student, which may mean collaborating with

parents/guardians, closer supervision of the student, redirecting to a less challenging activity or practicing appropriate and safe behaviors with the student.

Because we are outside for much of the time, it is especially important that children follow safety rules, being in-sight of an adult at all times. When we are outside, we have no fences. This means that if your child is a runner, we need to know this ahead of time. We do not have funding for one-on-one support. If an educator has to leave to follow a child, that leaves the other educators short-handed. If a child is being unsafe in the woods and refusing to work with our educators, we will have to ask the caregivers to come pick up their child. If staff finds that the student is not responding to classroom or outdoor strategies, parents/guardians will be called in to help make a plan for success. If there is no improvement after a plan is put into place, then there will be a meeting called between the parents/guardians and teacher(s) to either make a new plan, or for the child to exit the program. If a parent/guardian requests (or if staff recommends it and parents approve), staff will help seek out state and local resources for a student in need of specialized support.

Children with Special Needs All 3-6 year olds are welcome in our programs and we will provide reasonable accommodations for children with special needs or disabilities. We do not employ a special education teacher, however, if a child does need a specialized program, we will work with parents/guardians and providers to help meet their child's needs.

Non-Discrimination Field Farm and Forest values providing equal opportunity in its programs and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, gender, gender identity and/or expression, or sexual orientation.

Daily Expectations

Arrival and Departure Children should arrive for the program between 8:30 am and 9am. Pick-up is at 12:30 for children enrolled part-time and 3pm for full time children. Aftercare is from 3 to 4:30pm. If another adult is picking a child up, parents/guardians need to inform staff either verbally or in writing. Parents/Guardians should let the school know as early as possible when a student will be absent.

Daily Schedule Upon arrival, children put their belongings in their personal spot and begin the work of playing with materials, toys, and friends. Children eat snack when

they choose during this time as well. Following this 'work time' children are encouraged to join together for circle time, which includes seasonal songs, poems, and, if time allows, a story (orally told or a read-aloud book). Then everyone gets ready for extended nature play and exploration further afield from our building. Around noon, we return for lunch and some children depart at 12:30pm. The other children have rest time - either a nap or a read-aloud chapter book. The end of the day is filled with more play, nature exploration, and child-led learning ideas, following the 'emergent curriculum' philosophy that we employ. It is important to note that we try not to interrupt play and therefore we do not have set beginning or end times to the activities in our daily rhythm. Further, each child has the freedom to choose what they do and different children are often involved in different activities simultaneously. For instance, some may be painting while others are reading, playing with blocks, trying on dress up clothes or eating their snack. This is quite different from traditional programs, yet our rhythm is predictable, and we believe it is important to allow children the time and space to complete tasks at their own pace as much as possible.

Clothing All children should have a plastic bag labeled with their name on it that contains at least one full change of seasonally appropriate clothing in their backpack on the first day. This change of clothes can be left in their personal basket if parents prefer. A full change includes a top and bottom, underwear and socks. Children should also have a pair of shoes or slippers that can be left at school to wear inside the classroom.

As we spend a large portion of our time outside, children should be dressed in seasonally appropriate clothing and outerwear that is comfortable for extended periods outside. Clothing will get messy. Examples of **seasonally appropriate** outerwear include solid shoes, waterproof shoes on wet days, warm boots on cold days, rain pants and jackets, warm layers, hats, socks and mittens in cool weather. Please label all clothing items to help make sure your child's clothes get matched to your child each day!

If anyone has gear they'd like to donate to us so that we can distribute it to another child, please contact us! We do have limited gear to lend out to families.

Please see the following pages for gear recommendations and our suggested layering system:

Field Form & Forest

HOW TO DRESS FOR NATURE SCHOOL (WHEN IT'S COLD AND/OR WET!)

To ensure your child is warm, dry, and happy outdoors, please take a look at our recommended 1-2-3-4 layering system. If you have any questions or need help obtaining clothing, let us know!

Layer 1: BASE LAYER

This layer is closest to your child's skin and should be slim fitting. Wool, wool blends, silk, or synthetic materials like polyester are recommended. Cotton is NOT recommended as it absorbs moisture and is a poor insulator. Socks should be tall (no ankle or cotton socks!)



Layer 2: MID LAYER

This looser fitting layer adds a cozy insulating layer over top of the base layers. We recommend fleece or wool - a pair of pant bottoms and a pullover or zip up top work great. Add a fleece or down vest over top on those extra cold days.

Layer 3: OUTER LAYER

(Swap with rain gear for spring)

Snow pants/suits and boots should be insulated and waterproof. For cold, DRY days, puffy jackets are best - down filled or synthetic. For cold, WET days, an insulated waterproof jacket (like a ski jacket) is best. A shell over a puffy also works. When it's extra wet, rain suits or rain pants can be worn over top of this layer for extra protection.



(Swap with rain mittens for spring)

Layer 4: ACCESSORIES

Mittens/gloves should be insulated and waterproof and have a long, over sized cuff to fit OVER coat sleeves. Pack TWO PAIRS. For extra cold days, a thin pair of wool, fleece, or synthetic gloves can be worn underneath them. Hats, neckies, and balaclavas keep necks, cheeks, ears, and heads extra warm and protected. - fleece or wool is best.

Favorite Brands:

Base and Mid Layers - Reima, Polarn O. Pyret, Nui Organics, Ellas Wool, Chasing Windmills, Iksplor, L.L. Bean, Lands End, Helly Hansen, Patagonia, Ice Breaker Snow Pants, Jackets, and Suits: Reima, Polarn O. Pyret, Patagonia, L.L. Bean, Lands End, Helly Hansen Dridriksons

Snow Mittens: Reima, Polarn O. Pyret, Didriksons, Stonz, MTCi (budget) *Socks:* Darn Tough, Farm to Feet, Smartwool, Reima, REI

Snow Boots: Oaki, Bogs, Muck Boot Company, Kamik

Rain Pants, Jackets, and Suits: Oaki, Polarn O. Pyret, Reima, Celavi, Helly Hansen, Didriksons, Tuffo *Rain Mittens:* Reima, Polarn O. Pyret *Rain Boots:* Oaki, Lone Cone, Crocs, Bogs

Where to shop Local:

H.O.P.E Thrift store (Lyndonville), Little Red Wagon Consignment (Littleton), Franconia Basecamp Consignment (Franconia), Gear Again (White River Junction), Outdoor Gear Exchange (Burlington) Online Secondhand: Facebook Marketplace, Poshmark, Mercari, Patagonia Worn Wear

Online Resource: Outdoor School Shop

Meals and Snacks Parents/guardians are responsible for packing a hearty lunch and snack each day. We do not have the means to heat up lunch items or keep meals refrigerated for individual children. Children should also come to school each day with a full water bottle labeled with their name.

Depending on the needs of children in the program, we may ask parents to refrain from bringing in food with specific ingredients, such as peanuts, tree nuts or other allergens. Occasionally we have birthday celebrations and will supply 'treats' such as plain popcorn with salt only or fruit-based popsicles.

Sunscreen and bug spray Please send your child to school with both sunscreen and bug spray already applied when seasonally appropriate. If you want us to re-apply sunscreen or bug spray, please send your child with labeled sunscreen and/or bug spray in his/her backpack.

Tools Students who have been given parent/guardian permission will be given the opportunity to use hand tools such as but not limited to whittling peelers and hammers. The use of tools allows children to develop a sense of agency and self efficacy and learn responsibility as well as safety techniques with real tools. Children will be closely monitored and supported by adults when using tools at school.

Family Involvement and Communication

Volunteering and Visiting Parents/guardians are free to visit or stay at any time their child is attending programs. Please feel free to discuss with staff any special talents or skills you may be interested in sharing with our school community. In some cases, staff may discourage parents/guardians from bringing younger siblings for an extended period of time if it interferes with the goals of the program.

Home-School Communication Parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss their children with staff, including through short conversations at drop-off and pick up, emails, phone calls, and parent/guardian conferences. Conferences are typically scheduled twice annually, in the late fall and spring. Access to your child's record or staff records is also available upon request. Several family events are planned throughout the year. These events allow children, their parents/guardians, and other family members to get to know each other better and celebrate special events. Events may include a beginning of the year picnic, a harvest meal, a holiday craft making day, and an end of the year celebration. Advance notice will be given before any event and all families are encouraged to attend.

Complaint Procedures When parents/guardians have a concern or complaint about the program or the staff, it is best if they bring that concern or complaint directly to Field Farm and Forest staff. Parents/guardians may also contact the board of directors with any concerns that can not be resolved with staff. If this is not possible, or if a staff member, or the board of directors does not address the concern or complaint, parents/guardians can call the Child Care Consumer Concern Line at 1-800-540-7942 or file a complaint online through the Bright Futures Information System.

Health

Health Form Under state law, parents/guardians must provide documentation from the child's age appropriate well care exam, including information that may impact the

care of the child. This information must be provided within 45 days of enrollment. The health form will be kept in your child's confidential file. This form can be found here: <https://outside.vermont.gov/dept/DCF/Shared%20Documents/CDD/Forms/CC-General-Health-Examination-Form.docx>

Illness Policy Children should not attend the program if they are too ill to take part comfortably in regular activities, if they need care that significantly interferes with staff's ability to provide care for other children, or if they have signs and symptoms of a possible serious condition or a contagious illness. Staff will call parents to come and pick up the child if it is determined that they are too ill to attend the program. Staff will keep medical information confidential, but will alert parents/guardians if a highly infectious disease or condition occurs in the program. We follow the guidelines in the The Signs and Symptoms Chart in Vermont's Child Care Licensing Regulations, which is available on our website, and to parents/ guardians upon request.

Immunization Under state law, all children are required to have a current immunization record on file with the school, unless they have religious or medical exceptions. The immunization form or a signed exemption form must be on file before your child attends the program and will be kept in each child's confidential file. Please request that your physician send you records that you can bring to us.

Medication A written permission form from parents/guardians must be provided for any medications given to a child during the preschool day. You can find this form here: <https://outside.vermont.gov/dept/DCF/Shared%20Documents/CDD/Forms/Medication-Permission-Form-Sample.docx> All medication must be in its original container, properly labeled for the child, with administration instructions and administered prior to the expiration date on the container.

Non-smoking policy We have a non-smoking campus. Smoking, by parents, guardians, staff, or any others, will not take place in the building or on the premises, including the parking area.

Toilet Training Children attending our programs should be independent in toileting. While staff encourage children to use the restroom periodically, children should be capable of expressing their toileting needs when necessary.

Safety

Confidentiality All student records and information are confidential and all conversations with teachers or staff will be considered confidential unless otherwise required by law. Staff cannot discuss this confidential information of students with anyone who is not that child's parent/guardian. Visitors and volunteers may inadvertently gain access to information about other children. This information should be considered confidential and not be shared. Please respect the confidentiality of all families!

Mandated reporting All of the hired staff and teachers of Field Farm and Forest are "mandatory reporters," which means we are required by law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect. Visiting or volunteering parents ARE NOT mandatory reporters, but if a visitor/volunteer observes or hears something that causes them to suspect child abuse or neglect, they should report the incident to a staff person immediately.

Delays and closings In the event of inclement weather, we will post information about a delay or closing via the Remind App, email, and will post on our Facebook and Instagram pages. In most situations, we follow the delay/closure decisions of Kingdom East School District, but not always. We are not able to offer a refund if we need to close for a day due to circumstances beyond our control such as power outages or teacher sickness.

Emergency management/evacuation drill In the event of an extreme emergency where evacuation is required, we will transport your child to a safe location. We will make every possible effort to reach you in this event. The primary evacuation site will be the Vermont Children's Theater on Darling Hill Rd.

2024-25 School Year Tuition and Enrollment

Enrollment options	Tuition
5 full days	\$10,500
5 half days	\$6,850
3 full days (MWF)	\$6,300
3 half days (MWF)	\$4,100
2 full days (TuTh)	\$4,200
2 half days (TuTh)	\$2,750

2024-25 Year	9/3/24 - 5/30/25
Full day hours	8:30am-3pm
Half day hours	8:30am-12:30pm
Aftercare available M-Th for an additional \$15/day	3-4:30pm

We accept subsidies for qualifying families. Info about childcare subsidies can be found at: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/ccfap>

Withdrawal We trust that by enrolling in our program, families are making a commitment for the entire school year. Field, Farm and Forest makes year-long commitments to staff and other obligations based on enrollment numbers. Our operating expenses do not decrease upon the departure of a child during the course of the school year. Our refund policy is as follows:

We are generally not able to provide tuition refunds on or after January 1st, unless the withdrawal is due to circumstances beyond a family's control (loss of job, moving, serious illness), or if the withdrawal is based on staff determination that the child cannot be cared for safely.

Before January 1st, we will refund tuition for a family wishing to withdraw upon 30 days notice. Families will continue to be responsible for tuition during the 30 day period.

Requests to the Program Director to increase enrollment hours, e.g., going from three to five days a week schedule, or part-day to full-day schedule, must be made in writing at least two weeks prior to the 1st of the month. Increases to a student's enrollment hours, if FFF is able to accommodate, may only begin on the 1st of a month. Families will not be refunded for a decrease in hours of attendance.

September 2024 - May 2025 Calendar

Aug. 31 (Thurs) - Kinglets "meet & greet" 4-6pm
Sept. 3 (Tues) - **First day** of Kinglets nature school
Oct. 14 (Mon) - Indigenous People's Day **no school**
Nov. 25-29 - Thanksgiving break **no school**
Dec. 23-Jan 3 - Holiday break **no school**
Feb. 24-March 4 - Mid Winter break **no school**
April 21-25 - Spring break **no school**
May 26 (Mon) - Memorial Day **no school**
May 30 - **Last day** of Kinglets nature school

Teacher Contact Information

If you have any questions, please reach out to us!

Kendra Simpson, Program Director & Lead Teacher, 802-673-8704
kendra@fieldfarmandforest.org

Emily Bache, Business Manager & Assistant Teacher, 508-904-7385,
emily@fieldfarmandforest.org

Jessica Simpson, Co-founder & Teacher, 802-535-1101,
wilderfarm1809@gmail.com

Samantha Valentine, Assistant Teacher & Aftercare, 802-280-5203

Subsidy/Tuition Questions: Emily Bache, emily@fieldfarmandforest.org

Admissions: admissions@fieldfarmandforest.org

General Questions: info@fieldfarmandforest.org

Summer Questions: summer@fieldfarmandforest.org