

*Little Farm School, LLC
224 Sokokis Trail South
Limerick, Maine
207-600-2244
www.thelittlefarmschool.org*



Parent Handbook

WELCOME!

Thank you for your interest in Little Farm School! We are excited to be able to offer a nature based experience to those in need of quality care for their child! Little Farm School provides quality care for children ages one through six and is licensed to care for up to 40 children.

Little Farm School follows the LifeWays approach to childcare (find out more about this approach to childcare at www.lifewaysnorthamerica.org), which seeks to replicate the best elements of care found in a healthy family. It recognizes that young children thrive in a home environment that offers beauty, comfort, security and a connection to nature.

LifeWays draws its inspiration from Waldorf Early Childhood Education, which views childhood as a valid and authentic time unto itself, not just a preparation for schooling. In infancy and early childhood, daily life experiences are the “curriculum.”

Our curriculum follows the flow of the seasons and is deeply influenced by what is happening in the natural world. We strive to offer children safe toys made from natural and renewable resources. We use safe cleaning products and take into consideration the affect they have on our children and our environment. We offer organic and local food when available. We are also largely influenced by the works of Rudolph Steiner (1861-1925). Rudolph Steiner was an Austrian philosopher, scientist, mystic and prolific writer and lecturer who created a holistic educational movement known as *Waldorf Education*, as well as revolutionary movements in medicine, the arts, agriculture, even beekeeping and more. He is also the father of the Anthroposophical Society.

“Steiner, an Austrian educator who opened the first Waldorf school in 1919, was one of the early proponents of educating the whole child, not just the intellect. His indications for “developmentally appropriate education” were supported by the later work of Piaget and Gisell and are being upheld by recent brain research. When parents understand how children develop and learn, they are better able to counteract society’s tendency to treat and educate children as if they were little adults. For example, because young children learn primarily through movement and imitation, early childhood education in the home or Waldorf preschool/kindergarten needs to provide a program rich imaginative play, music, rhythm and artistic activities instead of teaching early reading and math or having a child sit in front of a computer. Studies have shown that the imaginative manipulation found in play-based programs provides the best foundation for later reading and math, and it can serve as a well spring of life-long creativity.”

Waldorf in the home:Waldorf Home Schooling Archives

Domestic, Nurturing, Creative and Social Arts, collectively known as “Living Arts,” are an integral part of the Little Farm School experience. The skills that children gain through the practice of the Living Arts cultivate within them a sense of initiative and purpose and provide a foundation for higher learning.

Domestic Arts

Children find joy in practical and meaningful work supporting home life, such as cooking, sewing, gardening and washing. Engaging in these activities and caring for their environment lays the groundwork for organizational skills needed in adult life.

Nurturing Arts

Emphasis is on loving human interaction, with warm speech, live singing, verses and stories. Physical care (diapering, clothing, feeding, etc) provides focused time for connecting with the caregiver. Our small program size (no more than 8 children) allows an individualized care approach.

Creative Arts

Imaginative play is fundamental to the healthy development of children. Plenty of time is provided for indoor and outdoor play, with natural toys and materials that ignite their imagination. Older children engage in developmentally appropriate enrichment, including painting, handwork, and circle games.

Social Arts

Celebrations that honor the seasons and traditional festivals of the year, including birthdays, provide opportunities for building community. Family-style blended age care creates a unique environment to learn and teach across the ages.

Learning Opportunities at Little Farm School

LifeWays' practices are based on the understanding that the young child learns through imitation, sensory stimulation and active participation. The following opportunities will be available to children in these areas:

- Large/small motor skills- Infants will be allowed free movement which is the healthiest way for them to exercise large muscle activity. The best and most available manipulative for them to explore is their own body, finger and toes, etc. They will have a few simple toys made of natural materials as they begin to learn grasping and holding. As the child grows older, he will be allowed to do extensive building, creating and climbing, both indoors and outdoors with blocks, chairs and tables, wooden play stands (indoors) and tree limbs and stumps (outdoors). Through simple sewing, finger knitting, woodworking, folding, washing, and other practical skills, they will develop their fine motor skills.
- Creative activity – Almost everything in the environment will be allowed to be transformed through the child's play. They will build their own environments rather than having fixed and finished play centers. Manipulatives such as silk and cotton play cloths, building blocks, objects the children find in nature, dishes, baby dolls, etc., will be available for them to create their own scenarios. Infants and toddlers will be exposed to the creative play of the older children as well as having their own protective environment to explore. Three-to-six year olds will have opportunities to paint with watercolors, draw with natural beeswax crayons, and have simple craft projects throughout the year that have to do with the seasons and holiday gift giving.
- Social arts – A primary focus of Little Farm School is to help a child develop a healthy social foundation. This is especially supported through the creative playtime. Social challenges are handled on an individual basis, often through the use of stories, redirection and modeling of the appropriate behavior. Finger games, transitional tools, and games are also used as redirecting tools.

- Cognitive function – Recent brain research indicates that the kinds of activities listed above are the necessary foundation for healthy synaptic connections. Through touching, feeling, and doing, the child’s budding intellect is allowed to unfold at its own appropriate pace. The caregivers have ongoing speech, voice and movement training. Through their own growth and development, the caregivers will model healthy speech and movement for the children to imitate.

Growing a healthy body is of primary concern in the first seven years of life and will be the primary focus at Little Farm School. The children will be read to, and they will see their caregivers writing and reading. They will be encouraged when they begin to experiment with reading and writing on their own. As the child’s natural interest in letter and numbers awakens, he will be helped to explore them.

Rhythm, Festivals, Seasons and Nature

Rhythm is the flowing quality of movement from one activity into another; the movement and sequence are governed by the internal quality of the activities themselves as opposed to a schedule, which is a list of planned events with times assigned to each, these events need have no relation to each other aside from following a prescribed sequence. Little Farm School has a rhythm for each day, which may be referred to as a routine. It also follows the rhythm of nature and its seasons. Working with the seasonal themes of the year, a balance of the impulses from nature is woven through the artistic activities using stories, songs and verses to enliven and capture the children’s interest and imagination, qualities emerging from the soul. Creating a small nature table or corner in the preschool is a way to bring nature indoors and celebrate the rhythms of the seasons. It helps the child to connect with nature, which is not separate from the spiritual world. Rhythm is also woven through the year following the festivals. The rhythm of each day, the rhythm of each season and the rhythm of the festivals of the year constitute the great rhythm of nature and the cosmos in which the children play in harmony.

Relationship With Mother Nature

A practical way to cultivate and nurture respect to nature and our environment is through recycling and composting. We have a small compost area and teach children how to recycle. These actions impact our environment in a positive way and children can feel this. We will garden in the summer and learn to plant seeds and how to nurture the natural world around us.

Hours of Operation

Little Farm School Early Childhood Program is open Monday through Friday, 7am-5pm. When enrolling your child, drop off and pick up times will be identified, and tuition charged accordingly. Little Farm School closes at 4pm on the second Wednesday of each month for our monthly staff meetings.

Arriving Each Day

You may drop your child off within the window of time identified by your contract, no later than 9am. Each day is planned with each child in mind. If you will be delayed, or your child will be absent, please let us know as soon as possible.

1. Upon arriving at Little Farm School each day please check your child in through the Brightwheel app. There will be a QR code posted inside the mudroom door, on your right.

Scan this through your Brightwheel app and enter the 4-digit password given to you through your Brightwheel account. You can change this code through your profile.

2. Once you come inside to the mudroom you can drop off any items into your child's cubbie. You are invited to walk your child to their suite to drop off or a caregiver will greet you in the mudroom and receive your child and bring them to their suite. Together with your child's caregivers, it will be determined which best supports the transition from home to school for your child.
3. The following suggestions are intended to support a secure drop off for all involved as you and your child enter LFS and part ways for the day.
 - Support your child to walk in vs being carried. We find this to exert certainty, confidence and independence for both child and parent entering into a group setting. Children at LFS are given the opportunity of free movement and rarely carried from place to place. Children receive much of their physical and emotional support from their caregivers at ground level.
 - Support your child in bringing their outer gear for the day to their hook. As much as possible, we encourage you to include your child in this process as it provides them with a connection to the care of their belongings and community, as well as an overall sense of purpose and belonging.
 - For children enrolled in Happy Nest and Enchanted Garden suites, consider the gate to the classroom as the threshold of departure. Perhaps it's helpful to imagine that once a parent opens the gate it provides a signal to caregivers (and your child) that the parent is ready to support children in walking through the gate/threshold while being greeted and received by a caregiver to start their day at LFS. The parent then closes the gate behind their child and begins their departure, as the LFS caregiver and child gesture goodbye together.
 - If your child clings on and resists your departure, a caregiver will be at ground level ready to receive them gently and lovingly while gesturing goodbye with your child as you depart.
 - Please refrain from "holding on" as this sends a message of uncertainty to your child and their caregivers.
 - It may be helpful to consider emotional goodbyes as something to expect, anticipate, allow and accept exactly as they are.
 - Caregivers at LFS consider emotional drop-offs as opportunities to bond and connect with children. The more loving and accepting we are of a child's emotions when departing from their most loved person(s), the more the child feels heard, seen and understood. This is an ultimate and clear path toward building trust, security, safety and love while away from home.
4. We will be aware of receiving each child to ease the transition. It is easier for the children to have fewer (though well-meaning) adults in their space, so morning arrival time is not a good time to speak at length with the caregivers or other parents. A brief check in or update is always welcome, and the caregiver is always willing to arrange another time to talk if more time is needed, and is accessible by messaging on Brightwheel.

Picking Your Child Up at the End of the Day

When arriving to pick your child up at the end of their day with us:

1. Please do not leave vehicles running while dropping your child off or picking them up.
2. Please use the same QR code scanning process through Brightwheel to check your child out.

3. Please come into the mudroom and a caregiver will bring your child and their belongings to you for dismissal. Children are not permitted to open the door and go out of the building without an adult accompanying them.
4. If you pick your child up outside, we ask that parents wait for their child by the fence on the hill to the play area, or at the building.
5. Please be extra mindful of your children and other children when in the parking lot!
6. Children are not permitted to play on or inside cars while in the parking lot. Please help your child into the car and buckle them in.

Separation Anxiety

As the children begin attending a new program some may experience difficulty with separating from parents at arrival time.

Here are some suggestions:

1. Demonstrate trust in the teacher and in the decision you have made on your child's behalf. Parents may inadvertently give their children a double message. The teacher says everything is fine and safe while the parent may be supporting the child's apprehension and fear by staying at school. While the child is seeking comfort and feeling anxious about the parent's inevitable departure, she is not free to have her experience of school, playmates, and activities. Until the child receives a positive message from both parent and teacher, the child can remain confused, and the adjustment period can be prolonged. Show your child that you have confidence in his ability to be part of this new experience.
2. Make partings brief. Each child will approach good-byes in a different way. Some seem to handle the situation fairly well, some show signs of distress and settle down shortly, and others are extremely upset with parting. Separation anxiety is actually a positive sign of the child's love for the parent and her feelings of attachment. It can vary with the child's age, her ability to deal with change in general, and with stresses in her life outside of school. In any case, this shift from home to school cannot occur fully without this parting. During the period of transition and adjustment, the parent may want to acknowledge and accept the child's feelings. Her sadness at "losing" the parent is very real, and she should be allowed to admit these feelings. At the same time, it is important for the teacher and parent to remain positive about the situation. Show understanding and support for the child's feelings, assure her that you will return, and leave her with a hug and a confident smile. Prolonging the parting prolongs the adjustment and the accompanying crying or tantrums.

Enrollment Procedure

Parents are encouraged to complete the Application for Enrollment on our website when interested in enrolling their child at Little Farm School. A visit/tour may be scheduled following the Application being submitted. Parents are required to review the Parent Handbook, also located on our website. If a space is available, the parents will be notified, and a contract will be created with the days and times of enrollment. Parents are asked to complete all enrollment documents including:

- One-week deposit (applies to the last week of care)
- Annual registration fee of \$50
- Contract
- Permission Forms
- Child Health Information
- Release for Emergency Medical Treatment

- Vaccination Record (printout from doctor is fine)**

All forms except those marked ** are due in on the first day of care. Those marked ** are due by the end of the first two weeks.

When the registration fee, tuition deposit and all completed forms have been received, your child will be considered enrolled.

Payment Policies, Late Payments, and Late Pick-Up Fees

A detailed payment policy is included in the enrollment and contract package and is available upon request. Payments may be made weekly, bi-weekly or monthly. Payments are due by 5pm on the Thursday of the week prior to care being provided. Payment is due for the time your child is registered for, regardless of the child's attendance (ie sick days, holidays, vacation days, snow days, etc.) Payments received after 5pm on the Thursday prior to care being provided, will be charged a \$40 late fee. If payments are late three or more times your child's enrollment may be terminated. Care will not be provided if payment has not been received.

A registration/supply fee of \$50 will be due annually on January 15th when your contract will also be renewed.

There will be a charge of \$25 per 15 minutes late for parents who pick up their child after Little Farm School, LLC closing time. The fee will be charged on the next week's invoice. Please do not pay the Little Farm School, LLC caregiver directly. An excess of three late pickups may result in termination. Parents will be billed weekly through Brightwheel. If you choose to pay for more than one week of care at a time, a credit will be created in Brightwheel and will be reflected on your weekly statements. You may choose to enroll in online payments through Brightwheel. We also accept cash and check payments. If dropping payment off at Little Farm School, please put payments in the proper payment box located in the mudroom. Please do not hand your payment to a caregiver. If paying with cash, please label the cash so we know who to credit it to!

Withdrawals

Parents may terminate enrollment as needed, but they are required to give the center three weeks written notice prior to termination. Failure to do so will result in the one-week deposit not being applied to the final week of childcare. In the unlikely event that Little Farm School, LLC terminates your child's enrollment, as much notice as possible will be given and your deposit returned, unless termination is due to failure to pay. In this case, the deposit will be retained by Little Farm School, LLC.

Health Policies

Because Little Farm School is concerned with the whole child and finds a relationship between health and child development, you will find your child's teacher receptive to any comments you wish to share about your child's health, illnesses past and present, sleeping and eating habits, stresses, and home-life

rhythms.

People who have symptoms of respiratory or gastrointestinal infections, such as cough, fever, sore throat, vomiting, or diarrhea, should stay home. Testing is recommended for people with symptoms of COVID 19 as soon as possible after symptoms begin.

Possible symptoms include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

People who are at risk for getting very sick with COVID-19 who test positive should consult with a healthcare provider right away for possible treatment, even if their symptoms are mild. Staying home when sick can lower the risk of spreading infectious diseases, including COVID-19, to other people. For more information on staying home when sick with COVID-19, including recommendations for isolation and mask use for people who test positive or who are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19, please refer to the CDC's [Isolation and Precautions for People with COVID-19](#).

Should Little Farm School experience an outbreak of COVID-19, we will work with state or local health departments in accordance with state and local regulations.

Communicable Diseases

Parents will be contacted if a child develops any symptoms that suggest illness such as:

- Unusual listlessness
- Excessively red or draining eyes
- Skin rash
- Severe cough
- Persistent nausea, with or without vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Persistent headache, stomachache, or sore throat
- Elevated temperature

Children with the following communicable diseases will be excluded for the time periods stated below.

· *Impetigo*: There must be no draining lesions, and the child must have received 24 hours of treatment.

· *Head Lice*: The child must be free of all lice and eggs before returning; treatment alone is not sufficient for re-entry. The child's head will be checked before the child may return to class. All blankets, pillows, and articles of clothing that may have been exposed to lice should be taken home and washed thoroughly.

· *Scabies*: The child must stay home until at least 24 hours after treatment has begun.

- *Throat/Scarlet Fever*: The child is to have 24 hours of antibiotics or equivalent treatment before returning to school.
 - *Chicken Pox*: The child will return to program would be when the child is cleared by the CDC
 - *Ringworm*: The child will be excluded until treatment has been started.
 - *Conjunctivitis*: The child is to have 24 hours of treatment before returning to school.
 - *Mumps*: The child will return to program would be when the child is cleared by the CDC
 - *Measles*: The child will return to program would be when the child is cleared by the CDC
- For other communicable diseases, please refer to *Communicable Diseases Quick Guide For Schools and Child Care Centers in Maine* by the Department of Education.

Medications Brought To School

If your child requires medication during the school day, the following steps must be followed:

1. Medication must be handed from an adult to the class teacher.
2. All medication must be in its original packaging, fully labeled.
3. A dated permission form on Brightwheel must be received from the parent or legal guardian.
4. Little Farm School will record the administration of all medications, including the amount, time and date on the child's Brightwheel profile.
5. Permission is also required to administer any nonprescription medications to a child. Verbal permission is allowed in emergencies if the provider makes a note on the child's Brightwheel profile.

Reporting of Injury

Little Farm School, LLC will record all serious injuries and reportable incidents by the child while in care through our Brightwheel app. This record will be made on the day of injury and include the date and time of the injury and notification of parent. This record will be shared with parents within 48 hours of incident. In accordance with State of Maine Licensing Rules for the Licensing of Child Care Centers, in the very unlikely event that a child is seriously injured or passes away at my licensed Child Care Program, Little Farm School, LLC is required by rule to report any such instances to the Department within 24 hours of any such occurrence.

Emergency Preparedness

Little Farm School, LLC has a comprehensive Emergency Preparedness Plan that is available for parents to look over and review. This includes practices for natural disaster, human caused events and fire drills.

The following actions will be practiced monthly during Fire Drills, and will be the plan used in case of fire.

1. Evacuate anyone in immediate danger!
2. PULL FIRE ALARM or call out "CODE RED" if alarm does not work.
3. Report Fire to 911 once outside using cell phone. Tell 911 "There is a fire at 224 Sokokis Trail South, Limerick
4. Use portable fire extinguisher if it is safe to do so.
5. Evacuate ALL children and ALL adults through the nearest exit away from the fire to the Sugar Bush. As soon as the fire is discovered, start an orderly evacuation as during a fire drill. Infants may

be placed in the Evacuation Crib and pushed out of the direct exit in their class. If needed use the alternate exits as identified. The director or designee (if absent) will check all bathrooms and any other room or areas where someone may be.

6. All teachers will take attendance log, time sheet, first aid kit, emergency files, cash, checks, and any other record easily carried.
7. Teachers will close all doors as they leave the building.
8. Teachers will account for all children by checking attendance log and reporting to the director or designee as soon as possible.
9. Director or designee will provide first aid as needed.
10. Do not reenter the building until permission is given by the Fire Officials.
11. Notify parents to pick up children as soon as safety permits.

Discipline Policies

Our teachers strive to understand the true nature of the young child. Because the child at this age is still learning to have an inner rhythm regarding appropriate behavior, we work strongly with creating a healthy outer rhythm for the child that allows an appropriate balance between "breathing in" and "breathing out" activities. In our program there are long periods each day of open-ended and free play both inside the classroom and out on the playground. As well, on any given day there are certain activities that are the same each day of the week. For instance, Tuesday may be soup and bread day. Therefore, the child knows that every Tuesday, we will make and eat soup and bread together. Young children often struggle with transition times throughout their day, resulting in acting out because they are feeling insecure about what may be happening next. The same daily rhythm in the classroom (and at home) helps reassure the child and helps eliminate some difficulties that can be found in early childhood settings.

Teachers strive to be worthy of the young child's imitative nature. Therefore, we work with modeling appropriate behavior for the child. When handling an incident, the teacher intervenes in a pedagogically appropriate way that promotes learning about desired behavior. The discipline relies on redirection and leading the child to "do" the desired behavior, since children at this age are highly imitative and learn by doing. When a situation occurs which requires disciplinary action, the first step is to "right the wrong." For instance, if someone has been hurt, the child responsible for the action will be asked to tend to the hurt child and give aid. Perhaps he or she will need to say, "My hands are used for good work and play," or "I will use kind and gentle words." At times, however, the teacher may have the child work with one of the teachers doing a meaningful task, such as setting the table or sweeping until the teacher feels the child is ready to re-join their classmates. As well, the teacher may have the child who is struggling sit beside her and come to stillness, or the teacher may speak with the child one on one.

However, when a teacher perceives that a child has reached his or her limit and is no longer able to engage constructively at school, the parent will be called to come and pick up their child. The teacher will contact the parent to discuss the matter later that same day. If challenges are ongoing, the teacher will request a conference with the parents. The adults in the child's life can assess the situation and work together to find ways to help the child express him or herself in a healthy way, both physically and socially, and to gain impulse control. As well, parents can assist the work that the teacher does in the classroom by sharing with the teacher any changes in the child's home life that could result in unusual behavior.

There are certain serious behaviors that compromise the health and safety of all the children in the class. These include:

- Aggressive behavior that may result in injury of a child and/or intentionally injuring a child
- Running away
- Repeated bullying or teasing
- Repeated refusal of teacher's guidance
- Uncontrollable disruptive behavior
- Aggressiveness and/or repeated misuse of toys and/or classroom materials

Any of these behaviors may result in a child being sent home from school. Again, the parent will be called to come and pick up their child. The teacher will contact the parent to discuss the matter later that same day. Teachers will use discretion and respond appropriately to the age and temperament of the child. If a child is experiencing ongoing struggles the teacher and faculty may require some steps to support the child, family, and class as a whole. Here are some possible solutions and plans that the teacher may require for an ongoing situation:

- The teacher may require a conference with the parent before the child is permitted to return to school.
- The caregivers may meet about the child and try to come up with safe and appropriate solutions to the challenges of this particular child and develop a "Behavior Support Plan". This plan will outline the steps which will be taken at home and at school to address the child's behavior and help him or her to move in a more positive direction. The Behavior Support Plan may contain measures such as having the child work beside the teacher during free play, restricted contact with other children, early dismissal, a shortened school week, or other possibilities. A meeting will be arranged with the parents, teacher to discuss the Behavior Support Plan. The school will continue to work with the situation as long as the individuals and parents follow the agreements outlined in the Behavior Support Plan, which may be modified over time, and work, in good faith, to resolve the difficulties.
- The teacher may request that the parents seek some kind of outside help. This could be a play therapist, occupational therapist or another kind of expert that is deemed appropriate for the needs of the child.
- If the challenges are not shifting or improving and the child is unsafe either with himself/herself or with others, the teacher may require a time at home (suspension).
- If the behavior is sufficiently disruptive or endangers other children's safety it may be necessary for the child to be withdrawn from school.

Sometimes, the teacher and parent may come to the conclusion that the child is either not ready for school yet or that it is simply not a good fit all around. If this is the case, the teacher may reassess the situation the following semester. A lot can happen in the young child's life and within themselves in six months. Our primary goal as early childhood educators is to help the child to reach his or her highest potential. We strive in every way to meet the individual needs of each child and the needs of the class as a whole. Most important is the emphasis on open and direct communication between all of the adults in the child's life, for this is essential for the child's success in these formative years.

Expulsion/ Suspension

Unfortunately, there may be times that a family and child are asked to leave Little Farm School, LLC.

Parental Actions That Lead To Expulsion:

- Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payments.

- Failure to complete required forms, including submitting and updating child's immunization records.
- Habitual tardiness when picking up your child(ren).
- Unwillingness to work as a team when supporting your child's development.

Immediate Causes For Expulsion:

- The child is at risk of causing serious injury to others present in the program or himself/herself.
- Parent/guardian physically or verbally threatens me, my family or another enrolled family.

Proactive actions that can be taken to prevent expulsion due to a child's disruptive behaviors:

- Redirect child from disruptive behavior.
- Reassess classroom environment, appropriateness of activities, supervision.
- Use positive methods and language while disciplining children.
- Acknowledge appropriate behaviors.
- Give verbal warnings.
- Give time to regain control.
- Through daily communication the team* will work to carry out program and home expectations around behaviors working on changing. (**team = any adult directly involved with the individual child*)
- The parent/guardian will be given literature or other resources regarding methods of improving behavior.
- Recommendation of evaluation by professional consultation on premises.

Documentation of disruptive behavior will be maintained in confidentiality.

Schedule of Expulsion:

- The parent/guardian will be informed about the expected behavioral changes required to remain at Little Farm School, LLC.
- If after planned remedial actions have not worked, the child's parent/guardian will be advised verbally, and in writing, about the child's or parent's behavior warranting an expulsion.
- The parent/guardian will be given a specific expulsion date that allows the parent/guardian sufficient time to seek alternate child care (approximately one to two week(s) notice depending on the risk to other children's welfare or safety).

Child's Rights

While you will find specific sections through various policies in this Care Agreement Handbook that speaks to the rights each child in care at Little Farm School, LLC has, it is important to clearly state the rights of children attending Little Farm School, LLC for child care:

- Each Child has a right to an environment that meets the health and safety standards in the current Family Child Care Licensing Rule.
- Each Child receives childcare services without regard to race, age, national origin, religion, disability, sex or family composition.
- Each Child is treated with dignity, consideration and respect in full recognition of their individuality.
- Each Child has the right to the implementation of any plan of service that has been developed for that Child in conjunction with community or state agencies.

- Children with disabilities have the right to reasonable modifications to the policies of Little Farm School, LLC.
- Each Child has a right to Developmentally Appropriate activities, materials, and equipment.
- Children must be free from emotional, physical, sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- Each Child has the right to freedom from harmful actions or practices that are detrimental to the Child's welfare, and to practices that are potentially harmful to the Child.

Organic Meals and Snacks:

Healthy Nutrition:

We believe healthy nutrition is one of the most important components of growth and development. We are committed to using local, naturally or organically grown meats, vegetables, grains, etc., when available, and cooking with whole foods. Children with special dietary needs are welcome and their family's dietary choices and preference will be respected and accommodated, if possible. We will provide all meals and snacks for children over one year, unless other arrangements are made due to dietary restrictions.

What Should Stay in My Child's Cubbie?

It is the parent's responsibility to make sure their child always has:

1. Extra clothing: at least **two extra pairs** of socks, underpants, tops and bottoms in their bag in case of accidents, getting wet when playing outside, or overall mishaps.
2. We ask that children wear shoes that strap to their feet in order to support their movement. A loose fitted pair of shoes make it challenging for children to run and play as they wish. Due to us still working to create lawn spaces at our new facility, a lot of our lawn space still has lots of sticks and twigs sticking up through and remnants of poison ivy. We recommend children wear shoes that cover their feet in order to keep them safe from these elements.
3. Please make sure your child comes to school with the appropriate winter clothes during the winter season (snow pants, warm jacket, hat, mittens, snow boots) as well as rain gear during rainy weather (rain suit and rain boots). We highly recommend checking that their outerwear is "waterproof" and not just "water resistant"!
4. We require all children to have a one-piece rainsuit that has elastic at the arm and leg openings. Here is a blog post with some great recommendations for rain gear <https://runwildmychild.com/best-rain-gear-for-kids/> A brand that we find works really well for children is *Oakie*. This brand can stand up to the amount of work and play that we do each day, does not tear easily, keeps the children dry, and will fit over snowsuits for those few days each year when we may need both! We have not found the Tuffo brand to work well for us as when it has any dirt near the zipper it becomes really hard to maneuver for both kids and adults! You can purchase the rain suit a size bigger than your child needs now as long as there are velcro cuffs at the wrists and ankles to allow the rainsuit to be cinched to fit until the child grows into it! We spend as much time outside as possible. Children enjoy their outdoor time better when appropriately dressed and a good quality rainsuit is imperative to keep them dry in snow, rain, mud and water play!

Parents provide all diapers for their child. You are welcome to bring in a supply of them (ie, a sleeve of diapers or an entire box). Little Farm School will provide unscented, natural ingredient wipes and our own homemade salve or cornstarch for diaper rashes. If you prefer something else, you are

welcome to supply that. We are happy to work with children and families in toilet training and will discuss with families as needed. We allocate space in the bathroom for each child's supplies. **Please label everything!** There are a lot of children getting ready to play outdoors, and a lot of children coming back in after playtime, all getting dressed and undressed in a relatively small area. Labeling your child's clothing (especially outerwear) will reduce the chances of his or her clothing being misplaced. We do our best to keep track of everything, but mistakes do happen. While we will try to help you track down a missing item, Little Farm School, LLC is not responsible for lost or missing clothing. We appreciate your understanding.

Rest periods

In compliance with state licensing laws, all children in care for more than 4 hours will have at least one nap or rest period. Cultivating a relationship with rest is vital to health and wellness! All children are gently guided into a restful space with warm lavender water face washes, a rest blessing, and gentle lullabies. After a quiet time period, children who aren't asleep will be invited to play quietly until the rest period is over. All children are awoken by 2:30pm to move into our afternoon activities or begin preparing to go home. Little Farm School provides each child with a crib or mat with a blanket and pillow. All bedding is freshly laundered at least weekly, or when soiled.

Toys

Please have your child keep his or her own toys at home. This will avoid heartbreak over lost or damaged toys. We also prefer to have children use the classroom toys that reflect our philosophy of using simple, natural materials to encourage and stimulate imaginative play. The school toys, likewise, should remain at school.

Release of Children to Non-Custodial Caregivers

Parents will provide a list of all persons with permission to pick child up from Little Farm School, LLC. When one of these people arrives to pick your child up, they will be asked to present a photo ID before being able to leave with your child. If the family has a custody agreement, documentation will be provided to Little Farm School to keep in the child's file.

Child Abuse Policy and Licensing Violations

All teachers in Maine, including early childhood teachers and childcare workers are mandated by the state of Maine to report any incidences of suspected child abuse or neglect. Our commitment to all young children's rights to be safe and cared for is a responsibility that we take seriously. We will be following the State's mandated reporter laws. All childcare personnel are aware of their status and responsibility as mandated reporters to the Department of Health and Human Services when there is reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect of a child under the age of eighteen (18) or Licensing Violations that may occur in child care. Reports regarding suspected child abuse or neglect will be made immediately by telephone to: Maine Office of Child and Family Services 1-800-452-1999. All staff are required to complete mandatory reporter training upon employment and renewed regularly as defined by the Department of Child Care Licensing.

Serious Injury/ Accident Report

Maine Law requires child care providers to report serious injuries that require medical treatment by a healthcare professional or emergency room, for example, a broken bone, losing consciousness.

Little Farm School, LLC will use a Serious Injury/ Accident Reporting Form to report accidents as required by licensing rules. A copy of the completed form will be kept in the child's file and provided to the parent/legal guardian. Parent/Legal Guardian signature will be secured on the Reporting form within the required 48 hours of the event.

Supervision of Staff

Mary Vermette-Graham, owner and director of Little Farm School takes great pride in the work that she does, and time spent with children, and staff will also be supported in their work and time they spend teaching. Classrooms will be staffed with co-teachers who will work alongside one another taking on varying roles and supporting one another.

Mary supervises all staff but that from time to time she may have to be off-site. In her absence, there will be a staff person that will be assigned as a Team Leader that meets the qualifications for leadership in the absence of the Director.

Confidentiality

Information regarding your child and family is sensitive. Names and identifying characteristics of children and families will not be shared with anyone other than staff members working in the classroom and the Director. This includes sharing stories of events that happened, in documenting events for accident forms, or the posting on our private social media without parent permission. Staff members may not distribute or post children's last names, address, phone numbers and will not take photos of your child without your permission and will not share photos of your child on their personal social media or store photos of children on their personal phones/cameras.

Confidentiality applies to all verbal and written information about potential, enrolling and previously enrolled children and their families. All staff will be briefed on the need for confidentiality and will be expected to fulfill their obligation to respect the protection of privacy. Written records will be stored in a secure location with access limited to the Director and the child's teacher. No information will be released about a child and the parent/legal guardian during enrolment or transition to another receiving program or school without first receiving the written permission of the parent/guardian.

Childcare License Handbook

A copy of the Childcare licensing Laws for the State of Maine can be obtained by visiting https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/ec/occhs/child_care/10-144%20CMR%20Ch%2033%20Family%20Child%20Care%20Provider%20Licensing%20Rule%207-5-18.pdf

Americans with Disabilities Act

Little Farm School, LLC does not discriminate against persons with disabilities on the basis of disability, that is, that they provide children and parents with disabilities with an equal opportunity to participate in the childcare center's programs and services.

Educators at Little Farm School use developmentally appropriate practices and consider the unique needs of all children when planning. Staff will make every attempt to make any adaptations or modifications necessary to meet the needs of the children. Schedules, routines and activities are flexible and early childhood educators will work with therapists, special educators and other professionals to integrate individual accommodations, modifications and strategies into classroom routines and activities. Any adaptations and plans will be reviewed with families and other

professionals supporting the child, to evaluate if the child is finding success in the learning environment.

Open Door Policy

Little Farm School, LLC has an open-door policy and welcomes parents to stop in at any time, though we encourage you to be mindful of our daily rhythm and rest times!

Sample Rhythm of The Day

Our daily rhythm provides a balance between active times and rest times thereby nourishing each child's sense of health and well-being. When caring for infants, we are led by their individual needs. Our typical day with children over 12 months may look like this:

7am – Drop off begins

7:30am – 8am – breakfast served

8 am–9:30 am

Creative, free play, along with practical work (cleaning, baking, laundry folding) or creative arts (gift making, painting, coloring)

9:30am – children and caregivers work together to tidy the space and use the bathroom/diapering

9:45 am

Circle Time – lead by child's caregiver, with seasonal songs, games, and stories

10:15am

Morning snack – usually consists of an organic, whole grain along with fruit, dairy or nut butter

10:30 am-12pm

Outdoor play, which includes time spent playing in our play yard, working in our organic garden, caring for our farm animals, or taking a nature walk. We value all weather and will go outside almost every day, in every weather!

Noon

Hot, organic, home-cooked lunch

12:45 p.m.

Rest preparation begins, with warm face cloths, and tucking in with a story and lullabies sung by the child's primary caregiver. Little Farm School allows for this personal connection of story and song instead of recordings.

1:00pm - 3:00 pm

Rest Time – all children take part in rest time, though not all sleep every day. Quiet, restful activities are provided for children who do not fall asleep.

2:45pm

Children begin to be wakened with a song. They fully awaken as they enjoy nurturing time with their caregiver and they help to make their beds and put their sleeping cots away for another day.

3:30 pm
Snack Time

4:00pm -5:00pm

In the warm months from April to October, the children enjoy outdoor play until they are picked up by their parents. During the winter months, the children may spend this time playing indoors.

Little Farm School

Calendar of Closed and Paid Holidays 2026

Thursday and Friday, January 1-2, 2026 in observance of New Year's Day

Monday, January 19, 2026 – Martin Luther King Jr Day

Friday, February 6, 2026 and Monday, February 9, 2026 - LFS Staff attends Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America conference

Monday, February 16, 2026 – President's Day

Monday, April 20, 2026 - Patriot's Day

Monday, May 25, 2026 – Memorial Day

Friday, June 19, 2026 - Juneteenth

Monday, June 29 - Friday, July 3, 2026 - Closed for Vacation

Wednesday – Friday, August 5-7, 2026 – Closed for Training

Monday, September 7, 2026 – Labor Day

Monday, October 12, 2026 - Indigenous People's Day

Wednesday, November 11, 2025 – Veteran's Day

Thursday and Friday, November 26 and 27, 2026 – Thanksgiving Holiday

Thursday, December 24, 2026 – Friday, January 1, 2027 – Closed for Winter Holiday Vacation

Little Farm School will close at 4pm on the second Wednesday of each month for our monthly Staff Meeting. LFS will close at 4pm on the following dates:

January 14, 2026

February 11, 2026

March 11, 2026

April 8, 2026

May 13, 2026

June 10, 2026

July 8, 2026

August 12, 2026

September 9, 2026

October 14, 2026

November 4, 2026 (note this is the first Wednesday of the month)

December 9, 2026

Library

Little Farm School, LLC has a number of books about education, parenting, family life and Anthroposophy—the philosophy underlying Waldorf education. Several books are displayed on the shelf in the mudroom. Parents and friends are encouraged to borrow books.

Reading List

Below are suggested titles for adult reading about Waldorf education.

Early Childhood

Beyond the Rainbow Bridge - Barbara Patterson

Work and Play in Early Childhood - Freya Jaffke

The Disappearance of Childhood — N. Postman

The Incarnating Child — J. Salter

Childhood: A Study of the Growing Soul — C. von Heydebrand

The Young Child: Creative Living with 2-4 Year Olds — D. Udo de Haes

Brothers & Sisters — K. Koenig

You Are Your Child's First Teacher — Rahima Baldwin Dancy

The Genius of Play - Sally Jenkinson

Early Childhood Education/Care

Home Away from Home: LifeWays Care of Children and Families – Aldinger & O'Connell

The Education of the Child - Rudolf Steiner

Miseducation: Preschoolers at Risk — D. Elkind

Kingdom of Childhood — R. Steiner

The Way of the Child — S. Harwood

The Recovery of Man in Childhood — A. Harwood

Nokken - A Danish Approach to Waldorf-based Child Care - Helle Heckman

The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon — D. Elkind

Fairy Tales

The Wisdom of Fairy Tales — R. Meyer

The Uses of Enchantment — B. Bettelheim

Festivals and Family Life

Festivals with Children — B. Barz

Celebrating the Festivals with Children — F. Lenz

Festivals, Family, & Food — D. Carey and J. Large

The Children's Year — S. Cooper, C. Fynes-Clinton, and M. Rowling

The Christian Year — E. Capel

The Spiritual Tasks of the Homemaker - Manfred Schmidt-Brabant

Lifeways: Working with Family Questions — G. Davy & B. Voors, eds.

More Lifeways — P. Smith and S. Eklund Schaefer

Sing a Song with Baby – songbook and CD - Mary Schunemann

This is the Way We Work-A-Day – songbook and CD - Mary Schunemann

Rudolf Steiner

The Essential Steiner — R. McDermott, ed.

Toys and Play

The Doll Book: Soft Dolls & Creative Free Play — K. Neuschutz

The American Boy's Handybook — D. Beard

The American Girl's Handybook — D. Beard

Toymaking with Children - Freya Jaffke

Painting with Children — B. Muller

Children at Play: Preparation for Life — H. Britz-Crecelius

TV

What to Do After You Turn Off the TV — Frances Moore Lappe and Family

Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television — J. Mander

Unplugging the Plug-in-Drug — M. Large

Who's Bringing Them Up? — M. Large

Amusing Ourselves to Death — N. Postman

Waldorf Education

School as a Journey — T. Finser

Toward Wholeness: Rudolf Steiner Education in America — M. C. Richards

Education towards Freedom — A. Klingborg and F. Carlgren

Teaching as a Lively Art — M. Spock

Waldorf Education: A Family Guide — P. Johnson Fennert and K. Rivers

"The various activities of later life are carried out by the child in his or her play, which he/she conducts in full earnestness. Out of intellectual efforts by adults, all sorts of occupations and toys have been conceived for children, but children merely want to re-enact the actual work of adults. At kindergarten age the child really has the urge to imitate what the grown-ups are doing. It is therefore the task of kindergartens to introduce the activities in life in such forms that they can enter into the play of the child. . . . What one brings to the education of children should be taken from life itself."

Rudolf Steiner, 1923

HOW TO ENROLL?

We strongly encourage prospective parents to read through this handbook and come for a visit to get a sense of the program. The initial meeting will take place after hours. A second visit during program hours can then be scheduled, if desired. An interview will be conducted to assure that the program is an appropriate fit for your family.

About The Director



Thank you for your interest in Little Farm School! My name is Mary Vermette-Graham and I am the director of the preschool and childcare program. I am the wife of Joshua and the mother to our three daughters. We live in Limerick on the land I was raised on. We built our home in 2001 and have added lots of gardens and animals since then. We now have a dog, cats, pigs, goats, chickens and ducks!

I have always been a lover of children and families! I began working in early childhood in 1995, including a preschool program that I ran out of my home in 2000-2004. I earned my Child Development Associate in 2000. I am also a graduate of Lifeways of North America. I have over 100 training hours on topics pertaining to families and children. I am currently First Aid and CPR certified.

I also worked for the Parent Resource Center in Springvale from 2005-2009. The Parent Resource Center provides parent education to families in York County.

I was a home-schooling parent for 12 years. I loved being home with my children and being an integral part of their education. I have explored all kinds of methods and philosophies and have found the Waldorf method to fit our family best. We have been working with Waldorf philosophies for 15 years.

Please let me know if you have any questions about the program offered. I look forward to getting to know you!