



Forest Hill Nature Preschool Parent Handbook

2025/26 School Year





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Mission Statement

At Forest Hill Nature Preschool & Childcare we want the opportunity to nurture your child, support your family, and improve our community through nature-based education in a loving, Christian environment.

Reggio Emilia Approach to Education

This educational approach is named after the city in Italy where it originated. There are several key elements to the approach:

Community

We believe that your child's preschool education should be a cooperative effort between the school, the child, and the parents. At Forest Hill Nature Preschool & Childcare, parents are valued and supported. We will work with you to create the best educational experience for your child,

including lots of opportunities for parents to be involved with the curriculum and with the school--field trips, celebrations, and special parent & child events.

Active Learning

We value children's active participation in the learning process. Children are presented with many materials, both natural and traditional, with which to help them construct their own understandings of concepts taught. This is a powerful approach to education--children learn best when they are excited and involved in their own learning, and children behave best when they are provided with both guidance and respect by their teachers.

Environment

The school environment is essential to providing children with a meaningful learning experience. We believe that an outdoor learning environment provides children with opportunities to interact with nature--observing, experimenting, building, planting, and tending. Our classroom environments are carefully planned to offer children opportunities to become artists, dancers, singers, builders, scientists, chefs, athletes, mathematicians, readers, and writers.

Education of the Whole Child

Your child's academic, social, emotional, and spiritual growth is our top priority. We will challenge your child with academics presented through play and hands-on projects. Weekly Spanish instruction will challenge your child to learn basic Spanish phrases and concepts. All children will

receive enrichment through our Art Studio and Wild in the Woods programs. Our 4s students will participate in small group reading instruction with our Reading Teacher. They will meet with teachers in small groups to create projects, enjoy outdoor experiences, practice mindfulness, and develop reading skills. Regular cooking projects and activities will give your children excellent mathematical applications and memorable real-world experiences. We will teach your child to use the Fruits of the Spirit--love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control--on a daily basis in all interactions at school. We will teach your child how to use specific strategies to share, take turns, cooperate, and handle conflicts. We are dedicated to helping your child become the unique and special person God has created him or her to be!

Curriculum

At Forest Hill Nature Preschool, the children are taught using a flexible, play-based approach. The children start their day with circle time, led by their teachers. During their day, children also have opportunities to learn through play in classroom centers, small group and one-on-one projects and games with their teachers, outside play in our nature playgrounds, songs and literature, crafts and art exploration, science experiments, cooking projects, and Bible stories. We believe that providing a well-rounded day with lots of time for both teacher-led and student-led activities helps your child develop academic concepts in a fun and exciting learning environment. Curriculum goals for each age group are available for review on our website, and teachers are always happy to answer any questions you may have about your child's growth and

development throughout the year. We will plan to send home reports about your child's progress in November, February, and May. Parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled for all students in early November and in May on request.

Parents are reminded that Forest Hill Nature Preschool is a Christian preschool environment. The children will be taught Bible stories each week in their classrooms. They will begin the day with prayer and will pray before eating. We will talk to your child openly about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. If your family actively practices another belief system, we respect your choice to do so in your home, but we cannot separate your child from our religious curriculum because it is embedded into each day. If you have specific questions or concerns about your child's spiritual education, please talk to your child's teacher or to Miss Lavonne.

School & Home Communication

As partners in your child's development, it is important for the school and parents to maintain consistent and open communication throughout the school year. At FHNP we use Brightwheel, a parent communication app that parents can download onto your phone. Brightwheel allows the teachers to send photos, videos, and notes about what the children are learning and doing at school each day. There is also a messaging feature in Brightwheel that allows parents and teachers to communicate directly. Email is our primary form of communication from the school office—it is paperless, immediate, and easily accessible. Teachers will upload

lesson plans into the "Learning" section of Brightwheel to share what the children are doing each day. Some teachers may also send home an email at the end of each week giving information about what is planned in your child's classroom for the following week. The administration will send important information home by email as necessary. We ask that parents please plan to check your email regularly for school communications.

Infants/Toddlers

In the infant and toddler program, Brightwheel allows the teachers to log the children's diaper changes, naps, and feedings so that parents can easily track their child's care.

Infants and Toddlers will also be assessed by teachers on an ongoing basis, progress will be shared in daily notes and through use of the Ages and Stages developmental screening tools completed at home and shared regularly with teachers. Teachers in the infant classrooms create individual lesson plans each week for each child in their care based on the developmental domains of personal/social development, cognitive development, language development, and physical development. As they make observations of the growth and milestones the children exhibit in the classroom, they will add these observations to your child's feed in Brightwheel.

Inclusion Policy

At Forest Hill Nature Preschool, we actively promote inclusive practice to best meet the needs of the children, families, and staff at our center. All children are welcome to attend our school

regardless of ability, need, background, culture, religion, gender, or economic circumstances.

Through inclusive practice, we aim to reflect our wider community and promote positive attitudes to both the similarities and differences in each other. The curriculum, activities, books, materials, and environment are used to reflect the diversity of all children, families, and the wider community. When necessary, we will provide modifications and adaptations to help all students achieve success in our program. We are happy to work with students who have an IEP (Individualized Education Program) in our preschool 2, 3, and 4-year-old classes and our Kindergarten class and can assist parents with securing additional help and resources when there are mutual concerns about a child's development. Our center participates in Maryland Child Care Scholarship program for subsidized childcare payments. We also participate in subsidy programs with Child Care Consultants in Pennsylvania, with the Child Care Aware Military Assistance Program, with the MCCYN Navy subsidy program, and with the Veteran's Affairs office subsidy program.

In order to provide the best care for our students, we will participate in a state-approved screening process for all students using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, or ASQ. Parents will be asked to fill out a screening survey in the first two months of school, which will be used to determine if your child has any patterns of behavior that represent a concern for his or her development. Any concerns that are identified by the staff will be shared with parents immediately in confidence to create a working plan of action to provide assistance or identify additional resources that may be available to help your child.

We are happy to partner with parents in helping every child succeed in our program.

Safety and Security

Parents enter through the preschool or infant entrance to the school which are monitored by the office staff. On the preschool side of the building, we have a separate playground entrance at the end of the building which is also always locked and accessible by code. Once parents are in the front lobby on each side of the building, they must enter a code to access the classroom doors.

Students are only released to individuals that you have designated as authorized on your child's Emergency Form. Please note that we can only release students to adults over the age of 18. If your child will need to be picked up by someone other than the people you have designated, you may write a note or call the school to provide authorization. If someone is coming to pick up your child for the first time, please ask them to bring a photo ID to school to verify their identity.

Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures

INFANT/TODDLER DROP OFF AND PICK UP: Infants and toddlers can be dropped off at the first set of doors in the Advent Lutheran Church.

PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN DROP OFF AND PICK UP: Preschool and Kindergarten students can be dropped off at the entrance

doors around the back of the Advent Lutheran Church building. When you get to the church, follow the parking lot around to the back of the building. Parents can park in front of the school, in the parking lot or in the grassy area to the left of the driveway. Parents and children enter through the glass doors. We ask that preschool students plan to arrive by 8:30 AM so that children can settle into their classrooms. After 9:00 AM half of the classes will be outside for their scheduled playground times, and it will be more difficult for parents to find them for drop off. Kindergarten students need to arrive by 8 AM to be ready for Morning Meeting at 8:15 AM.

AM students can be picked up in their classrooms any time between 11- 12 PM. Full-day students can be picked up at any time. We generally recommend that the full-day preschool children be picked up after rest time. Kindergarten students need to stay for the full instructional day until 3:00 PM unless there is an emergency. Parents picking up before 3 PM can pick up directly in the classroom. The children will be outside most days between 3 and 4 PM. After 4 PM the children can be picked up in the aftercare classrooms. The children's tote bags will be set up outside on designated shelves for parents at pick-up time.

Snacks and Lunches

All children will need to bring an AM snack with a drink. We prefer to only serve milk, water, and 100% juice as beverages. If you would prefer your child to drink water at snack time, they can use their water bottle.

We ask that you try to send healthy snacks whenever possible. At snack time, your child or his or her teacher will choose a healthy item from

your child's lunchbox to serve for snack. If you would prefer to designate a snack, please include a small note in your child's lunch or label the item(s) that you would like to be eaten at snack time. Each week your child's teachers will send out weekly updates to let you know what is happening in class. Please check the updates carefully for cooking and snack projects.

Our full-day students will need to pack a lunch. We do have microwaves in all the classrooms, so it is OK to send in items to be heated for your child's lunch. We ask that you refrain, however, from sending in items that need to be assembled and cooked from scratch--this can be very time consuming for the teachers who are also preparing lunches for other students in the group at the same time. As per licensing regulations, we will be providing 1% organic milk to all the children at lunchtime each day. We will offer the preschool children a choice between white, strawberry, or chocolate milk and additional refills of white milk as requested. In order to accommodate the nutritional requests of all of our families, parents may request an alternate to organic 1% cow's milk. In addition, our center purchases and can provide almond milk, soymilk, oat milk and lactose-free milk, and we are happy to provide these upon parent request.

Parents provide AM snacks and lunches for the children. Lunches will be kept in a refrigerator in the classroom, and the temperature is monitored to ensure the safety of the children's food. We also keep extra healthy

food items, including cereals and whole grain snacks, fresh fruit, cheese, yogurt, and dried fruits in our center kitchen area to supplement lunches and snacks as needed.

Please make sure your child's lunchbox is clearly labeled with his or her name (sometimes we get duplicates!). Lunch boxes are stored in the classroom refrigerators. Please make sure you have your child's lunchbox and water bottle before you leave at the end of the day. Lunchboxes should be in your child's tote bag at pick up. The children usually have their water bottles with them either outside or inside.

Students in the aftercare classroom will be provided with a healthy snack each afternoon.

Rest Time

Our full-day preschool students will have a rest time each day after lunch. The children will rest on cots in their classroom. Your child will need to bring in a small sleeping bag or rest mat to make the cot more comfortable. Students may also bring in a small pillow and/or a stuffed animal if they would like. You may choose to send in a stuffed animal that can be kept at school or one that travels to and from school in your child's tote bag. Please let your child's teacher know if a stuffed animal or blanket needs to be sent back home each day! The teachers will send home all bedding to be laundered every week. Please wash the bedding items and return them the next school day.

Sometimes parents ask us to try to keep the children awake during rest time so that they will go to sleep earlier at home in the evening. Unfortunately, due to licensing requirements, that is not something that we can do. If the children fall asleep, they are allowed to sleep, and the teachers will not actively keep children awake who are tired.

Some children have already outgrown a daily nap and we realize that rest time can be a long, stressful time of the day for these children. To prevent your child from being forced to "lie down" or "be still" for unreasonably long periods of time, we offer several other options for

these students. Some teachers invite the children to pack a "quiet box" for your child to use at rest time. A quiet box is a shoebox that your child can fill with small toys that he or she can play quietly with on his or her cot while the other children are sleeping. If you would like to send in a quiet box for your child, please check with your child's teacher and make sure to label it with your child's name. We also plan an additional PM center time for our non-sleeping students from 1-2 PM or 2-2:45 PM with additional staff. At the end of rest time, all students who have been playing in PM centers will return to their classrooms to finish the day with their teachers and classmates. We hope that this arrangement will help the children have a peaceful environment for napping if they need the rest and fun options for play for children who are not sleeping or who wake up early from their naps.

Kindergarten students do not have a rest time built into their schedules and will not need a nap mat or nap supplies.

School Supplies

We will provide most of the supplies that your child will need at school. You will, however, need to supply a few items.

Every student will need a change of clothes to keep at school. We ask that you put the clothes in a shoebox clearly labeled with your child's name on the end of the box. Please feel free to have your child decorate the box. You can use a shoebox that you have at home, or you can use a plastic shoebox. Your child's teacher will let you know if your child's box needs to be replenished with any items throughout the year. We keep a community supply of extra clothes for emergencies as well and are happy to accept any preschool size donations that you may have at home!

Some teachers may provide a bin for your child's extra clothes. Teachers will send out additional communication for any other items that your child may need at school. We are asking the Kindergarten students to bring in and manage some of their own school supplies as a way to promote independence and school readiness.

We ask that every student bring a reusable water bottle to school. We refill water bottles through the day using cold filtered water. We ask that parents please wash water bottles regularly at home. Please bring only water in your child's water bottle.

Every student will also need a tote bag that your child can carry to and from school. We will provide your child with a school tote bag, labeled with his or her name. Your child is welcome to decorate it

to make it more personal. Because we are using tote bags, your child will NOT need a separate backpack.

If your child is wearing diapers or pull-ups, you will need to send in a pack in your child's size to be kept at school and a pack of wipes. Our policy is to keep each child's individual diaper supply separate and to

keep wipes in a community supply. When your child runs low on diapers or pull-ups the teachers will let you know. If the class runs low on wipes, everyone will be asked to bring in another pack. If your child has sensitive skin or requires special supplies, please put these items in a labeled bag and provide them to the teacher to be kept at school.

Children in the preschool and toddler classes who attend full day will need to bring in a rest mat or blanket, pillow, etc. to put on their cot for rest time. Children in the 2s, 3s, and 4s classes will have rest time scheduled each day. Preschool cots will fit a standard crib sheet, or parents can purchase a nap mat set with top and bottom blankets and a pillow. Rest time bedding will be sent home each week to be laundered. Parents are asked to send these items back to school the following week. Parents of children in the Infant classes who are sleeping in cribs will bring crib sheets for your child to use at school. Blankets are not permitted for infants in cribs.

Discipline Policy

The goal of discipline is to help the child develop inner controls so that he/she may move toward appropriate social behavior. Methods for resolving conflicts are:

Positive guidance, Setting clear limits, and Redirection

Our center firmly believes in redirection. If redirection is not effective, we may possibly choose to ask the child to sit in a “time out” depending on the age and development of the child. If “time out” is given, the child will sit for no longer than 1 minute per year of their age, ex: if the child is 3 years old, they will sit for no longer than 3 minutes. “Time out” is given in the classroom and in clear sight of the teacher at all times.

When disputes arise among children or between a child and teacher, the teacher will encourage a talking out process among those involved. The goal of this talking out process will be to acknowledge feelings and find solutions using children’s ideas whenever possible. Our teachers have been trained using a school-wide Problem Solvers curriculum to help children work through conflicts and challenges with peers.

Reflection is part of the process that the students engage in with teachers' help in response to inappropriate behavior choices that the teacher is helping the student to move beyond. The students create a list of classroom expectations as a group in each class and post these expectations in the classroom. If a student is having difficulty adhering to the expectations, the teacher will intervene first by talking to the student and redirecting to other activities. If the behavior continues to be a problem, the student may be asked

to fix the problem (pick up toys thrown, help a child who has been hurt by the student's behavior, etc.) and the teacher will talk to the child about his or her actions and how these actions affected the rest of the class.

The teacher will help the child by talking through the reflection process with the child. For example, the child may be asked to think about how another child felt about being pushed, hit, or having a toy grabbed away. The child initiating the behavior will think of a way to help remedy the situation, maybe by getting ice for a child who has been injured or picking up toys that other children may trip over.

This

process of reflection and problem solving to fix the natural consequences of the child's actions helps the child to begin to develop a sense of action and consequence and empathy for the other students who were adversely affected by his or her actions. Engaging in this process also helps the students begin to develop a sense of responsibility for their class and their classmates, lending a deeper understanding of the rules and expectations that have been set up in the room.

If a child is overly aggressive or is repeatedly destructive of other children's work as a pattern of behavior, the staff will work closely with the parents and child to create a plan to help the child begin to control his or her behavior.

Our school is dedicated to working out discipline issues within our program, and when appropriate with parent permission, seeking additional behavior consultation services to pursue additional options for support of the student. We recognize the negative repercussions of

suspension and expulsion on young children, and we will guard against taking these actions with our students. We will continue to service children with challenging behaviors as long as we are able to work cooperatively with the family to address the behavior. We are dedicated to continued staff development in effective behavior management to ensure that all students in our program are treated with fairness and respect.

Staff will continuously supervise children during disciplinary actions. The staff will not use abusive, neglectful, corporal, humiliating, or frightening punishment, nor shall a child be physically restrained unless it is necessary to protect the safety and health of another child or others. This will only occur in the presence of a witness(es) and will be documented by the director in Brightwheel and with a written Incident Report.

One-on-One Support Policy

One of our goals at Forest Hill Nature Preschool & Childcare is to foster developmentally appropriate independence in children's daily living and social skills and provide consistent safety in our environment.

Some children may require additional support, like one person to be assigned to work exclusively with one child throughout the day to assist with addressing safety and challenging behavior concerns. Although we strive for all children to be successful and happy in our environment, our school cannot provide one staff member to be assigned to one child. If our school determines that your child requires one person exclusively to work with them, we will help

you access the services and support that you need through the county's Infants and Toddlers and Child Find programs, or through one of the many private agencies that help students needing more focused supervision and support. If parents choose not to access these services and one-on-one aide is required to ensure the safety of your child and the other children in the class, the additional expense will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian. Additional salary for a one-on-one aide will be billed at \$16/hour for a 7-hour school day, \$112/day or \$560/week. The school will continue to pay any salary for that individual earned over \$16/hour (our staff members earn \$17-\$28/hour based on experience and training) and to pay for the benefits package of that employee, including paid leave, health insurance, continued training, and other expenses. This expense will be billed in addition to the weekly tuition.

We will continue to welcome outside agencies, such as private companies or insurance-approved agencies to provide one-on-one accommodations. Forest Hill Nature Preschool & Childcare will continue to collaborate and support Harford County Public Schools educators and paraprofessionals who frequent our building to deliver special education services. Moreover, our school will continue to support children with IFSP/IEP/504 who attend specialized programs in the public school system and we support all our children who are recommended to attend as determined by team meetings.

Protecting Children from Abuse

In our profession, each of our staff has a responsibility to prevent child abuse and neglect of any children involved in our center. An abused child is defined as a child who has had non-accidental physical injuries inflicted upon him, injuries which are at variance with the history given of them; a child who is in a condition which is the result of maltreatment.

- any non-accidental physical or mental injury (ex: shaking, beating, burning)
- neglect of a child (ex: failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, education, mental care, appropriate supervision)
- emotional abuse (ex: excessive belittling, berating, or teasing
- which impairs the child's psychological growth)
- at risk behavior (ex: placing a child in a situation which might endanger him by abuse or neglect)

The definition of child neglect is a child who has been abandoned, denied proper care and attention physically, educationally, emotionally or morally, or a child who is allowed to live under circumstances, conditions or associations injurious to his well being.

As childcare providers, we are mandated by law to report any suspicion that a child is being abused, neglected, or at risk as soon as this situation is suspected, by making a verbal report to Child Protective Services. We take the care of our children and their well-being very seriously, and we are dedicated to the protection of all children.

The management of this program supports a zero tolerance for abuse and neglect and will implement immediate action should there be an

allegation that a staff member abused or neglected a child. The administration will protect the child, including immediate notification of a parent or guardian, once there is an allegation of abuse or neglect of a child in our program.

Any staff member accused of abuse or neglect will be immediately removed from his or her position until Child Protective Service's investigation is completed. Based on whether the allegations were substantiated or not, the employee would either be dismissed from his or her position or allowed to return to work.

Staff training: Staff will be required to attend bi-annual staff meetings, held in September and February, where we will review the steps for reporting suspected abuse and neglect and the role of a mandated reporter. All new staff will be trained in these procedures prior to their start in the classroom.

Sick Policy

Please do not bring your child to the childcare or preschool if he or she is sick. Please call the center or send an email if your child is not coming that day. A doctor's note will be needed to show that your child has been cleared to be around the other children if a contagious type of sickness has occurred. The center will call you to pick up your child if we believe that he/she is too ill to be in the childcare or preschool. Your child can return to the school when he or she is no longer contagious (we ask that children stay home until they are symptom-free without medication for 48 hours).

Your child cannot come to childcare or preschool with a fever of 100° or higher and **the child must be fever free for a minimum of 48 hours without medication before returning to the center.** Giving your child Tylenol to reduce the fever before arriving to childcare or preschool in the morning is unacceptable because the fever will reappear, and the child will still have to be sent home. If the child has a fever of 100° or higher, we will call you to pick up your child as soon as possible. Reasons why the child cannot come to childcare or preschool:

- Fever of 100° or higher for children over 2, Fever of 101 or higher for infants and toddlers
- Cold with the thick green/yellow nasal discharge
- Constant runny nose
- Productive cough with green/yellow discharge
- Persistent phlegmy cough
- Croup
- Strep Throat
- Gastroenteritis (Stomach Flu)
- Persistent diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Ringworm
- Chicken Pox
- Hand Foot Mouth Disease
- Mumps
- Impetigo
- Pink Eye
- Head Lice, (children must be free of bugs and nits or eggs before

- returning to school)
- Scabies
- Fifth's Disease

These are just some of the contagious illnesses that would require your child to stay out of childcare or preschool. Each individual case is different and may require more or less time out of school. If you feel that your child is sick with a contagious illness, please verify with a doctor that your child is clear to come to school before bringing him/her to the childcare or preschool. This is for the protection of your child, all other children present and the teachers and staff.

A doctor's note will show that your child is cleared by a doctor, but you must abide by the center's sick policies first regarding when a child can or cannot come to childcare or preschool. It is our hope to keep the school as germ-free and sick-free as possible. Once ONE child comes to the childcare or preschool sick, he or she is exposing everyone to that illness. It can be a horrible sick cycle! So, let's keep it healthy--If a child continually comes to the childcare or preschool sick and the parents do not abide by the center's sick policies, childcare will be terminated at the discretion of the center director.

Health and Wellness Policy

At Forest Hill Nature Preschool, we are dedicated to providing a safe and healthy environment for your children. Keeping sick children at home is the first step in helping keep the classroom environment healthy. In addition, at FHNP, we maintain current

first aid and CPR certification for all staff in our program. This policy goes above and beyond licensing regulations so that our teachers are well prepared to handle any emergency situation or injury that arises. In addition, we review emergency procedures regularly with staff and students. We recognize that accidents and medical emergencies can and do happen during the school day and so we have adopted guidelines to prepare staff members to provide first aid and emergency care during those unexpected events. First aid supplies are kept in the office and are easily accessible to all staff. First aid supplies are also carried on all field trips off campus so that students can be provided with appropriate care as needed, regardless of the location.

Students with chronic medical conditions should have a treatment plan completed by parents and the pediatrician on file at the school. For blank treatment plan forms, please see the school office. The school will review all medical treatment plans with the parents and teachers annually and confirm the availability of authorized medications at the school. Epi-pens, inhalers, and medications for chronic illnesses should be kept at the school with appropriate paperwork following the Medication Policy. Parents authorize the staff to provide treatment for minor medical emergencies including small cuts, scratches, scrapes, bruises, nosebleeds, splinters, bee stings, and bug bites. Staff are trained to watch for signs of more serious injuries and allergic reactions, and appropriate steps will be taken to inform parents, and to contact Emergency Medical Services as necessary.

In addition to special medical plans, the school will require all students to submit completed paperwork for the Licensing-approved Health Inventory prior to starting in the program. Lead testing is now required for entry into school. Immunization records are required for all infant and toddler students. Students in preschool and Kindergarten will need an Immunization record unless parents have signed a religious exemption. Religious exemption can be found on the Immunization form.

Medication Policy

Forest Hill Nature Preschool abides by the Maryland State regulations for dispensing medicine. By policy, any medications that are given to children including over-the-counter and prescription medications **MUST** be approved by your child's doctor in writing before we can give the medicine to your child at school. A Medication Authorization Form must be completed to be kept on file at the school, and any medications that you bring to school must be hand delivered by the parent to your child's teacher or an office staff member. Prescription medications are

Photo Release

One of the best technological advancements for preschool teachers is the digital camera. Your children will be doing many fabulous things throughout their day and we know that you as parents treasure a sneak peek into your child's day. Brightwheel has allowed our teachers to share photos with parents throughout the day. At the beginning of the year, we send home a photo release form for you to complete for your child. On the form, you will have

several options to choose from to maintain your child's security.

You may choose to allow:

- Pictures of your child posted only in the classroom and in projects your child completes
- Pictures posted in the classroom and on Brightwheel (accessible to class parents)
- Pictures posted in the classroom, on Brightwheel, and on the public web pages
- No pictures taken of your child

If you are opposed to photos of your child being taken by the teachers, I do ask that you seriously consider the consequence for your child in the classroom before you decide to prohibit all photos. Documenting the process of learning by taking pictures of the children and making them available for children in the classroom in the form of projects or storyboards is a powerful learning tool for preschoolers.

Tuition Policy

Our school uses Brightwheel, a tuition payment system that allows parents to set up convenient automatic payments using a designated bank account or credit card to pay tuition bills on a weekly, biweekly, or monthly schedule. Weekly billing statements will be posted on Saturday of the billing week for charges incurred during the previous week and payment amounts are due on Monday of the following week. Parents can set up automatic payments or pay each week through Brightwheel.

Please note that tuition payments will be due for your child's scheduled

days in the school regardless of absences or family vacations during the school year, but we will waive absences related to illness with a doctor's note provided to the school. To waive the tuition, we are asking that parents plan to send the doctor's note for waiving tuition by FRIDAY of the week your child misses in order to have the full tuition waived, or by MONDAY of the following week for illnesses seen later in the week. Any doctor's notes turned into the office after Monday for the previous week will be credited at 50% of your child's owed tuition, and doctor's notes received more than two weeks after an absence will not be credited. All doctor's notes must be sent by EMAIL to Miss Jess, Miss Val or Miss Lavonne.

Your Brightwheel account will provide you with statements of billing amounts for tuition and any aftercare that your child attends. You can also use Brightwheel to print out receipts for payments made and statements for childcare reimbursement programs offered by your employer. These statements are accessible when you log into Brightwheel using a laptop or computer but cannot be accessed on your cell phone. If you have any trouble accessing your account, or if you have any questions regarding your account, please feel free to contact Miss Lavonne or Miss Jess directly. We are usually available to help parents at the beginning and end of the day, or you can reach the office by phone at 410-638-2761 or by email: misslavonne@fhnaturepreschool.com , missjessica@fhnaturepreschool.com. If you are attending our Infants/Toddlers program you may contact Miss Val by e-mail: missval@fhnaturepreschool.com .

Parents who do not wish to use the Brightwheel system may still have the option to pay tuition bills by cash or check at the school. Billing statements will be sent out on Saturday for each week, and payment will be due to the school on the following Monday. There will be \$25 fee for any returned checks, and balances unpaid on Thursday will accrue an automatic late fee of \$20/week until the balance is paid in full. The school will not allow students to attend more than two weeks with an unpaid tuition balance. Your child will be removed until the balance is paid in full. Consistent late payment of your child's tuition may result in dismissal of your child from our program. Unpaid balances will be sent to collections at the discretion of the administration.

Dressing your Child for Weather and Play

Please remember that your children will be playing outside every day, weather permitting. The teachers may take the children out to play in light rain or wet conditions—those are the best puddle jumping days! We will take the children out to play in cold weather and hot weather, although the teachers may make adjustments to the time spent outside depending on the temperature. We will take the children out to play in the snow (we LOVE to play in the snow!). Please take the weather into consideration when you dress your child for the day. As the weather gets cooler, jackets and coats will be necessary for your child to bring to school. In the winter, your child will need a hat, gloves or mittens, and boots to play in the snow.

We strongly recommend providing your child with a “muddy buddy” suit

during the school year. These are extremely helpful in keeping your child dry and clean when we play in the mud. They can be purchased at Kohl's and Bed Bath and Beyond, as well as online through amazon.com and zulily.com.

At school we plan many fun, age-appropriate activities for your children throughout the day and these are sometimes messy. Please be sure to send your child in clothes that can get messy. We will try to prevent your child from ruining clothing with paint or permanent marker, but it can be very stressful to a child if they are sent to school with instructions to stay clean or to not mess up their clothing. If your child needs to wear something special for an activity at school, the teachers will send home a note or email to let you know in advance.

Toilet Training

It is not necessary that children entering the 3-year-old class be potty trained to enroll in our program. We do ask that children in the 3-year-old class be working toward potty training, and that children in the 4-year-old class be fully potty trained prior to starting the school year.

Each classroom has a bathroom for students to use throughout the day and we will encourage independence appropriate to the level of each individual child. Our teachers are happy to work with your child to help him or her in the potty-training process when you feel your child is ready. If your child is wearing underwear at home, we encourage you to keep your child in underwear at school as well to help maintain consistency for your child. Please communicate

openly with your child's teacher regarding any potty training progress at home or any concerns you may have. Our goal is to help your child move toward independence at a pace that is comfortable for your child.

Pet Policy

This year Miss Terra will continue as our school's Animal Ambassador to bring animals into classrooms around the school to visit with the children. Miss Terra will be taking primary responsibility for making sure the animals are well cared for and will be scheduling times

sensitive to children with pet allergies and will work with your child's teachers to be sure that your child's class pet is not an allergy risk. Children are supervised at all times while handling animals at the school. All animals or pets kept at the preschool are given food and water regularly and animal enclosures are kept clean. Pet food and supplies are stored in a place inaccessible to children, as is any equipment needed to care for it. All pet cages and containers are secured so as not to be a hazard. Our teachers intentionally teach children to respect all animals and how to handle and care for them. We also teach children that not all animals are friendly, and to always check with an animal's owner before petting the animal. Animals and pets are kept away from:

- Where any child eats or sleeps
- Food preparation areas

- Children's toilet and hand washing facilities
Children's hand washing sinks
- Other areas that cannot be cleaned and sanitized readily (e.g. carpets) Sandpits

All persons including children wash their hands immediately after they have touched an animal, and children are taught the reasoning for this. In the event of a child being scratched or bitten by an animal and the skin penetrated, the wound will be cleansed with soap and water immediately and appropriate antiseptic applied. An Incident Report will be completed, and the parent contacted and advised to take the child to a medical practitioner.

Late Pick Up Policy

Our center is open from 7 AM until 6 PM. We ask that parents make every effort to arrive prior to 6 PM to pick up your child in the evening. Please remember that our staff may have other obligations past 6:00 and be respectful of their time. Children left at the center past 6:00 will incur an additional fee of \$1 per minute after 6:00 PM. This amount will be added to your weekly tuition billing. Repeated incidents of late pick up may result in dismissal of your child from our program.

Withdrawals and Dismissals

Parents have the right to withdraw your child from our program at any time, although we hope that if you have a concern about your child's care, you will first attempt to solve the problem by bringing it to the attention of your child's teacher or the director. If you choose to withdraw your child, we ask that you provide 2 weeks' advance notice of your intent. In the event that your child is withdrawn from the program during the school year, we will terminate future tuition payments, but tuition that has already been paid for services and student registration fees will be nonrefundable.

In the rare event that we find that our staff and our program are not able to meet the needs of your child, Forest Hill Nature Preschool does reserve the right to dismiss a child from the preschool program. Prior to taking such a drastic step, we would make every attempt to work with you to try to meet the needs of your child, whatever the challenge may be. Students may be dismissed for extreme or dangerous behaviors, for physical or psychological challenges that we are unable to meet, or for consistent breach of policy on the part of the parents. We also reserve the right to dismiss a child from our program if the parents act in any way that discriminates against another family or staff member in our program. If a child is dismissed from the program, parents will be responsible for any tuition payments that apply to time the child was in attendance, but all future tuition payments will be terminated. Student registration fees are nonrefundable if your child is dismissed from the program.

Enrollment and Registration

We will accept new student enrollment on a first-come, first-served basis for each class until the class roster is filled. Regulations allow 6 students in each Infant class, 9 students in the Toddler class, 12 students in the preschool 2-year-old class, and 20 students in our 3-year-old and 4-year-old classes, and we limit our Kindergarten class to 20 students. Infants and toddlers are enrolled in full day care 2-5 days/week according to your schedule and the school's availability. Preschool students may enroll as part-time or full-time, AM or full day. Kindergarten students will be enrolled full-time only. Tuition will be based on the number of days your child is scheduled and whether your child attends during only the AM or for the full day. Tuition amounts are posted on the school website. Each child entering the program will need a completed Emergency Form and a completed Health Inventory form. The Emergency Form is completed by the parents and reviewed each year for changes. The Health Inventory form must be completed by both the parents and the child's pediatrician. Licensing also requires documentation of immunizations and lead testing. If your child has attended another program, you may transfer these forms, providing the forms were completed and signed within the past year. Student registration forms must be accompanied by the \$200 registration fee to hold your child's placement in the program. The registration fee will be used to pay for field trips and classroom supplies for your child throughout the school year.

We open re-enrollment for the next school year to current

families in December. Current families are given a “first dibs” to make their class selections for the next school year. Parents register for classes in the school and are not guaranteed the same teachers that were present in the class during the registration period in December and January.

Availability is also filled on a first-come, first-served basis based on who completes enrollment paperwork. Meaning that you are not guaranteed your current availability for the following year, so do not sit on the application.

Once registration for a particular class has reached its maximum, we will provide a waiting list for any other families wishing to enroll students in the class. The waiting list form will be available online for families to complete and submit. There is no charge for adding your child’s name to the waiting list. If a space opens up in a class (a current student either withdraws or is dismissed), we will contact families on the waiting list in the order that their waiting list request forms were submitted. When a waiting list form is submitted, we will contact the family to let you know your placement number on the waiting list. Although we do not regularly inform families of movement on the waiting list, you are welcome to contact the school at any time to check on the status of your child’s waiting list request. If you are contacted from the waiting list regarding an available placement, you will have 5 business days to contact the school, confirm your interest in the placement, and submit your child’s registration form. Failure to contact the school or submit your child’s registration will forfeit your child’s placement, we will remove their name from the

waiting list, and we will move to the next name on the waiting list to offer the placement.

For the Kindergarten class, we ask that students be 5 years old by September 1 in order to enroll. Upon the request of the parent or guardian, students who are turning 5 by October 15 can complete the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment with a passing score of 250 in Math and 250 in Reading/ILA to be eligible to attend the Kindergarten class at Forest Hill Nature Preschool.

Emergency Situations

As a conscientious childcare provider, we try to be prepared for any emergency that may arise during the time your child is in school. The teachers and students will practice emergency drills periodically throughout the year to make sure that the routines are familiar to the children and that the children know and understand that their teachers will help them to be safe. We will practice fire drills, evacuating the children from their building to a meeting space a safe distance away. We will practice shelter-in-place drills, helping the children to find a safe place inside to stay with their teachers in case of an outdoor emergency. We ask that if you are picking up your child during a drill, please wait until the drill is complete before taking your child.

In the event of an actual emergency, we will follow the same procedures that are practiced during our drills to move the children to a safe location

and we will immediately begin contacting parents to advise you of the situation through email and Brightwheel messaging. In the event that our students need to be moved to an alternate location for their safety, we have made arrangements to move each class and their teachers. If it is necessary to move the children, the teachers will stay with them at all times and make every attempt to keep the children calm and occupied. We will immediately begin contacting parents to advise you of the situation through email and Brightwheel messaging, asking you to pick up your child as soon as possible. Our center does have an Emergency Preparedness Plan in writing that has been submitted and approved by the MD State Health Department and the Division of Emergency Services. The full version of our plan is available for parents to review in the blue Parent Resource binder that is kept in the front lobby area.

Parental Involvement

As a parent, there are many opportunities for you to become involved with your child's preschool experience at Forest Hill Nature Preschool. Parents are invited to chaperone for field trips, lend objects to the school to enrich classroom themes, help your child at home with the concepts we are learning in school, help your child choose items and prepare for show-and-tell, provide treats or other items for class celebrations, come in to read to your child's class, and volunteer to help with special days at school. In addition, we plan several parent and child events throughout the

school year to offer special opportunities for you to spend time with your child in the school environment and with your child's classmates and teachers. Parents drop off directly to your child's classroom, giving parents regular opportunities to talk to the teacher and daily

Brightwheel updates allow parents to see what their child is accomplishing in school. At the beginning of the school year, we ask that parents take a few minutes to complete a Home School Connection survey so that we can plan meaningful connections with their child and their family.

Our center has an open-door policy, meaning that parents are welcome to come and visit the school at any time. We do ask, however, that you take your child's reaction to your presence in the classroom into account when you plan a visit. If your child becomes upset or clingy and refuses to engage in his or her usual routines because you are visiting, it would be better for you to visit at another time. Coming at a later date to visit will allow your child some additional time to adjust to the classroom environment before you visit the classroom again. In addition, if your visit to the classroom causes other children in the class to become anxious and upset, we ask that you please excuse yourself and plan to visit on a later date, in the interest of the other children in the class.

If your child is routinely upset and clingy when you drop him or her off at school, your child's teacher will likely encourage you to say a quick goodbye and be on your way. Quicker goodbyes mean drier eyes. Please understand that this is in the best interest of your child. Saying a quick and confident goodbye and then leaving will help communicate to your

child that you know that he or she is in a safe place and that you feel confident that everything will be OK. After you leave, your child's teacher will provide comfort and distraction and will reassure your child that you will return to pick him or her up at the end of the day. If you stall in leaving because your child is upset or you appear upset yourself, what you are communicating to your child is that you are anxious about leaving your child in the school environment. This reaction will only increase your child's anxiety. Anxiety at drop off time is most often an issue for our younger children, but as the children begin to settle into more familiar routines, this anxiety usually subsides, and children become more and more confident about separating from mom or dad.

Celebrations

Celebrations are always fun for the children, and we will be planning many celebrations throughout the year. Each classroom will plan celebrations for holidays, and teachers may plan celebrations as a part of the theme that the class is working on as well. Parents are welcome to attend celebrations, and you may be asked to contribute treats or other items for class parties. For your convenience, we will always give parents plenty of advance notice about upcoming holiday parties and celebrations so that you can sign up to help out and make plans to attend if possible. Please understand that holiday parties and classroom celebrations will almost always be scheduled in the mornings so that all students (AM and full day students) will have the opportunity to participate.

Birthdays are also special days for your child. When it is your

child's birthday, you are welcome to send in a special treat for your child to share with the class at snack time. We ask that you avoid sending in any treats that may contain nuts, as some children are allergic and some children have not been exposed to nuts and may end up having an allergic reaction that hasn't yet been identified. Although we know that your child's birthday is a special day, we ask that you refrain from using the school day as an opportunity to throw a birthday party for your child. Having a special snack, a birthday crown from the teacher, and a prize from the birthday box is sufficient for celebrating your child's birthday in school. Birthday parties should be planned for after school hours. The preschool setting is not a place where we want families to start competing with each other to "outdo" each others' birthday celebrations. Parents are welcome to send in birthday party invitations to pass out to the students in your child's class, but only if you are planning to invite all of the students in the class. The classroom is not a place where we encourage students to play favorites or exclude any of our friends. Invitations that you plan to send to only select students must be distributed outside of school.

Parent/Student Directory

At the beginning of the school year, Forest Hill Nature Preschool will distribute parent/student directories to all families. These are provided so that parents will have an opportunity to contact your child's classmates outside of school to arrange playdates or to invite other children to a party. On your child's registration form, parents are given

an opportunity to include your family's contact information in the parent directory or to withhold it from the directory. Families who do not wish to publish their contact information will not be included in the directory, although your child's name will still appear on the class roster. We will also be using the directory as a resource for families in our program to access businesses owned or operated by parents in our school community, and social networks and community groups recommended by our parents. Our Home School Connection survey will be sent out at the beginning of the year. Please include this information in your survey if you have a business or social network that you would like to promote. We encourage parents to share this information to help us grow a community of support at FHNP.

School Closings

All school closings will be listed in the school calendar that is available on the school website. Holiday closings are limited and FHNP will often be open on some days that HCPS is closed. The following closings have been scheduled for the 2025/26 school year:

Monday 8/25: School closed for all students

Tuesday-Friday 8/26-8/29: Infant and Toddler classes ONLY

Friday, 8/29: Gradual Entry day for Preschool and K

Monday, September 1: Closed for Labor Day

Tuesday, September 2: First day regular classes

Thursday & Friday, November 27 & 28: Closed for Thanksgiving

Wednesday, December 24-Friday January 2: Closed for Christmas
Break

Friday, March 27: Early Dismissal for Staff Development
 Friday, April 3-Monday April 6: Closed for Easter Break
 Friday, May 22: Early Dismissal, last day for Preschool and K students

We will prorate partial weeks when the school is closed for students who are not attending childcare on these dates according to the following rate schedule:

Preschool Tuition		Infant/Toddler Tuition
4 Full Days: \$250	2 Full Days: \$180	4 Days: \$320
4 Half Days: \$210	2 Half Days: \$160	3 Days: \$240
3 Full Days: \$225	1 Full Day: \$80	2 Days; \$170
3 Half Days: \$200	1 Half Day: \$65	1 Day; \$85

Occasionally, the preschool may need to close for inclement weather. We will always make our decision independent of Harford County Public Schools. Sometimes the county closes and conditions are not threatening for our students, who do not have to wait outside for buses or walk to school. We will make independent decisions for school closings and delays on a case-by-case basis using weather forecasts and road conditions to determine the safest course of action for our staff and families. **All weather closings and delays will be communicated to families by email and posted on the school website by 5:30-6:00 AM.** If the preschool opens late, before care and the start of the preschool day will be delayed accordingly. In the event that HCPS closes early for weather related emergencies that occur later in the day, our center may also close early and there would not be aftercare

available on these days. In the event of an early school closing, we will notify parents by email, Brightwheel messages, and phone calls to make sure that everyone is informed of the closing. We ask that you make every effort to have someone pick up your child on time for an early closing so that our staff can leave on time and get home safely as well. Preschool tuition will be pro-rated for individual snow days that occur during the school year.

Calendar and Field Trips

Forest Hill Nature Preschool provides parents with a calendar of special events for the entire school from the first few weeks of school. Our calendar will be published in the first few weeks of school and shared with parents. In addition, your child's teacher may send home dates for special events in the classroom, snack and cooking projects, or parties and celebrations. Please add these dates to your calendar as well.

In order to enrich the preschool program that we are able to offer our students, we plan several field trips throughout the year. Adult chaperones are always welcome to join us for field trips. Some trips may limit the number of chaperones we can take. In these cases, we will open a sign-up for chaperones in the classroom prior to the trip date and take reservations on a first-come, first-served basis. The cost for your students to attend trips was included in your child's registration fee. Chaperones may incur an additional cost to attend a trip depending upon chaperone fees charged by the field trip venue locations--this information will be provided before each trip.

We will charter school buses for each trip that is scheduled during the year. For some trips we anticipate having plenty of room on the bus for parent chaperones to join us. For some trips, we may have to ask our chaperones to drive separately. In these cases, we will make sure that all chaperones have clear printed directions and that you know where to park and how to find our group when we arrive. Please understand that if we ask you to drive separately, it is to help us keep costs down for our trips by requiring fewer buses to be chartered. Bus fees are expensive, and chartering fewer buses allows us to schedule more trips during the year, ultimately benefiting your child. If you would like to transport your child to a field trip instead of having him or her ride the bus, that is fine. Please make every effort to leave at the same time as the bus, avoid making any additional stops on the way, and try to reconnect with the group quickly upon arrival on location. In most cases we will not be able to start our trip until all students have arrived.

For a complete list of field trips scheduled during the year, please check the school calendar, which will be distributed in early September.

Summer Program

The school year for Forest Hill Nature Preschool will run from the beginning of September to the end of May. We also offer summer care for our students available from the beginning of June to the end of August. All students who attended preschool during the school year are eligible to attend the summer program at our center, including students

who have graduated from the preschool 4-year-old class, who will be going to kindergarten in the fall. We also offer summer camp for school age students, ages 5-9. Summer pricing is available on the school website.

Registration in the summer program will also be open to families outside of the preschool on a first-come, first-served basis. Summer programs are offered for all preschool and school-age children, ages 2-9. Children in our Infant and Toddler programs are enrolled for year-round care. Children in our summer program will continue to pack a morning snack and a lunch, but afternoon snack will be provided for them. Our summer program will include weekly themes, a short circle time, crafts for the children, outside play, and rest time. We will also plan some cooking projects and special days for the summer program as well. We will require an additional registration for the summer program in 2026. Summer registration fees are \$50 and will be used to pay for supplies over the summer months. During the summer, parents can register for the days or weeks you anticipate using care and summer billing is charged only for days your child is scheduled to attend. Parents will be provided with a personalized calendar for your child(ren)'s scheduled dates during the summer session.

We thank you for trusting us with the care of your children. We will make every effort to ensure that your child's experience at Forest Hill Nature Preschool is of the highest quality. Please keep this guide as a reference throughout the school year, and do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns about the policies in this document or about your child's experiences in our center.

God Bless

