

Homeschool Program PARENT HANDBOOK



A bit about us

Our school opened in 2021 to offer an alternative to the screen heavy and sedentary environment found in many education institutions. Our team is passionate about quality, holistic elementary education for children. Born out of the pandemic, the benefits of our nature based, child centered approach have continued to be proven relevant and we are thrilled to continue serving our community today.

Equipping the Next Generation to mindfully shape the future

Our vision is for education to help children become kind, innovative, critical thinkers who are confident in themselves and in their ability to contribute to humanity.

Whole Child Education Rooted in Nature

Our mission is to provide children in NWA a holistic and immersive education grounded in nature that balances core academics with social emotional wellbeing while fostering a respect for self, others and the environment. *Our Homeschool Program supports this mission by prioritizing balance, social emotional health, and a connection to nature in the education setting.

Our School Culture

Village Mindset: We believe that it takes a village to raise Good Humans

This means we

- Respect children in all ways. This includes our words, actions, and intentions.
- Create a supportive network of grace and understanding between all members of our school; students, teachers, families, & support staff. We're all human and we're in this together.
- Commit to time together as a community by attending gatherings and school events.

Be Good Stewards: We believe we all leave a footprint in this world

Because of this, we...

- Respect nature by protecting it; whether it be saving a bug, not picking every flower, or being mindful of bending the little tree too far, we can each make a difference.
- Create and maintain well loved spaces indoor and out. Work together to keep our spaces beautiful!
- Source responsibly & choose sustainable & natural materials for cleaning, for projects and for decor.

Food Standards: We believe nutrition impacts our health

Food served by our school will be:

- Whole food when possible, minimal ingredients, organic when possible
- Free of chemical additives & preservatives, artificial flavors, sweeteners, & dyes

Cultivate Curiosity: We believe curious individuals are happier and healthier in life

- Use the moments children give us to guide learning. Appreciate teachable moments.
- Bring children's interests into the classroom. Encourage a passion for learning.
- We commit to fostering a love of learning

Accreditation Our school is officially accredited through Cognia. Accreditation through Cognia is built on research-based performance standards that give schools data and tools to make continuous and meaningful improvement. For more info check out Cognia's performance standards here:

<https://www.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Performance-Standards.pdf>

General Policies

Hours of Operation

Our Homeschool Program is held on Wednesday and Fridays from 9am-2pm

Tuition and Fees

Tuition is due each semester upon enrollment or by the 15th of each month for monthly payments.

You are welcome to pay by card or bank draft through Brightwheel, or check/cash given to the teachers at drop-off. Payments that are more than 15 days late will be subject to a late fee of 10% of tuition due.

We are an approved EFA/Learns Act provider.

Closings

We are closed for holidays aligning with Fayetteville Public School closings: Thanksgiving Break, Winter Break, Spring Break and a few school break days found on our school calendar at this link

[CALENDAR](#)

Inclement Weather and Closing for Ice/Snow

Thunderstorms, lightning, or extreme temperatures will keep us inside. We will close for dangerous road conditions. Please watch for announcements for closings when there is inclement weather.

If inclement weather conditions prevent the school from opening or require a delayed start, an announcement will be made through a Brightwheel message.

Arrival

Students may arrive at the Campsite beginning at 8:45a.m. Please park in the church parking lot next door. That is closest to the Campsite. Either walk your child in the fence or ensure they are met by a teacher to be checked in.

Departure

Pick up is at 2:00 p.m. Anyone picking up a child must be recognized by a staff member or verified through a message with the parent.

If you expect someone new to pick up your child, please add them as a Brightwheel contact or communicate this through a Brightwheel message

Late Pick-up Policy

In the event that a pick-up is unable to arrive by 2:15 for a child, we will charge a late pick up fee. \$1/min paid to staff on site.

Program size

Our program capacity is 14 students/day for the 26/27 school year.

Brightwheel

Each child has their own Brightwheel account. We use it for billing, communication, and attendance.

Meals, Snacks, and our Food Culture

As a school, we believe nutrition impacts our health. We value wholesome food that is free from preservatives, food dyes, and without flavors from artificial sources. We ask that you support our food culture by respecting these values when sending lunch, snacks, or treats for the class.

We are a Nut Aware, but not Nut Free facility.

* If food is bought in that does not meet our standards please do not offer it to others.

Technology and Toys

We are a slow-tech school. We do not rely on technology for our lessons. **We ask that devices are NOT brought to school.** This includes any device that can access social media (Phones, Tablets, Smart watches). Watches or phones *strictly for communication* are allowed and can be used when needed. We ask that toys are not brought to school.

Pets & Visiting Animals

We love animals at FNS! We have dogs, cats, chickens, and goats around the campus. If your child has severe allergies to any animals, FNS may not be a good fit for your family. Kindly, request permission from administration before bringing new animals to visit.

Gulley Park

We are lucky to be located just a short walk away from Gulley Park! Our school takes frequent trips over to the park to use the playground, walking trails, Niokaska Creek and the variety of natural areas as part of curriculum and free play.

Outdoor Environment & Dress for School

As a nature school, we believe it is imperative to health and development to spend time outdoors. We have an all weather policy. If it is safe to be outside, we will be outside. In colder months we bundle up, stay active. In hotter months, we like to take advantage of the creek and take breaks in the shade and indoors.

We encourage you to dress your child in clothing that is comfortable, appropriate for the weather, and that you keep in mind your child may get paint, mud, and other play messes on their clothing. Parents are responsible for sending weather appropriate clothing for their child based on the season. This looks like rain gear in wetter months, layers, and cold weather accessories in colder months.

Behavior Guidance

Because a nature setting comes with unique risks, our behavior expectations are higher than at a typical school. Safety and respect are at the heart of everything we do.

FNS Student Expectations

1. **Respect** — Treat teachers, each other, and nature with care.
2. **Kindness First** — We have zero tolerance for hurtful or mean-spirited behavior. This includes pushing, hitting, name-calling, grabbing, or aggression.
3. **Follow Nature School Rules**
 - Always stay within sight of a teacher.
 - Ask a teacher before eating or foraging anything in nature.
 - Respect physical boundaries that are set.
 - Support the daily rhythm — even if it's not your first choice of activity.

Note: Our kindergarten students are just beginning to develop these skills, so we understand there is more learning and grace in that class. *While some rules may seem small, each expectation helps ensure your child's safety and the trust between students and teachers.*

How We Guide Behavior

We use positive guidance, never shame or punishment. Here's how we handle behavior issues:

1. **First step:** The teacher talks with the child to discuss what happened, what choices could be made instead, and how to make it right.
2. **Second step:** If a child repeatedly (three or more times in a day) struggles to follow safety expectations, parents will be notified, and the child may need to be picked up for the day.
3. **Third step:** If there is an ongoing pattern that puts the child or others at risk, we may ask a parent to stay with the child during the next class days until the behavior improves.

If the issue is not resolved within three weeks, the child will be dismissed from the program for the remainder of the year. In most cases, children are welcome to reapply for the following year.

Health Policy

We strive to maintain a clean, healthy environment for our students and teachers. One ill child can infect the whole group and potentially the whole school. If your child shows any of the following symptoms, they must be kept home until they are ***without symptoms for 24 hours***. This will minimize the spread of infection and allow appropriate recuperation time for your child.

Your child should stay home if:

-They have a fever of 100.4 or higher in the last 24 hours. Your child may return after being fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication.

-They are vomiting or having diarrhea (2 or more loose stools in 24 hours). Your child may return 24 hours after they last vomit or have diarrhea.

-They have symptoms of pink eye.

Please let us know if your child is staying home due to illness. If your child shows any of the above symptoms during the school day, we will call you to pick them up as soon as possible. If we cannot reach you we will call other emergency contacts you have listed. This policy is set to prevent the spread of contagious illnesses. Your consideration in observing these policies will help keep our teachers and all of the students in our school healthy and happy!

Allergies/Action Plans

If your child has an allergy, please provide an Allergy Action Plan from your doctor. If medication for an allergic reaction is provided, please make sure we have the proper medication and that it stays up to date.

Accidents/Injuries/Emergency Treatment

While precautions are taken to avoid injuries, childhood accidents do happen as your child explores new physical skills and muscle control. All of our staff is trained in basic first-aid for minor injuries. Our outdoor skills teacher is wilderness responder certified.

In the event that emergency treatment is needed, here is the protocol our staff will follow:

Minor - If your child suffers a minor injury (i.e. small scrape or cut) that requires first-aid, We will care for the injury and you will be notified through a Brightwheel message or in person by a teacher at pick-up.

Serious – If your child suffers a somewhat more serious injury (i.e. bump on head, or possibility of stitches, sting) we will treat and post a photo of the injury through their account and contact you to come to the school to further evaluate your child.

Severe - In the event of a severe or critical injury (i.e. uncontrolled bleeding or head injury) you will be notified immediately and we will call 911 for your child to be transported to the nearest medical facility for treatment. *If an ambulance is required, costs incurred are the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

Saying Goodbye

Withdrawal Policy

If your child will no longer be attending, we kindly ask that you submit a withdrawal notice in writing. We appreciate receiving at least one month's notice.

Please note that refunds are generally not available for mid-semester withdrawals, as our budget is based on full enrollment. However, in certain cases, we may be able to refund unused months—this depends on our current budget limitations and whether the vacated spot can be filled.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Feedback

We would love to hear about your experience at FNS and would welcome any feedback, good or bad, that you would be willing to provide. You are welcome to contact admin by email (Fayettevillenatureschool@gmail.com), text or phone call anytime at (479) 343-1900 . We also send out a 2 min survey at the end of each semester and truly appreciate participation!

Thank you for being part of the FNS Family! It is truly a privilege to partner with you in your child's education.

Warmly,

The Fayetteville Nature School Team

Supplies List

- Water Bottle
- Lunch
- Backpack w/ extra set of clothes
- Weather appropriate accessories (Rainboots, hat, gloves, etc.)

How to dress for Nature School

[How to Dress Your Kids for the Outdoors | REI Expert Advice](#)

[How to Dress Your Kids for Outdoor Play in Any Weather](#)

DRESSING OUR KIDS FOR OUTDOOR PLAY IN ANY WEATHER

(adjust for exposure and activity level)



www.GetTheKidsOutside.com

