

Toddler Nature playgroup Handbook



A Wild Approach To Pre-K



BLACKBERRY
ACADEMY

OUTDOOR SCHOOL

Welcome Message



Thank you for trusting Blackberry Academy with your child's outdoor education. You have joined a community of like-minded families who believe in the power of nature to help children thrive in today's fast-paced world. Together we will help your child build social and emotional skills and help them to create a deeply rooted connection to nature.



Miss Yessie

Founder & Lead
nature mentor
Blackberry Academy
Outdoor School



Our Guiding pillars

Blackberry Academy Outdoor School was founded to address two issues. 1) Accessibility and Equity in early outdoor education. 2) General unhealthy nationwide trends toward more screen time and less unstructured outdoor play for young children. These issues are the pillars of the school's mission, every choice we make is made with these in mind.

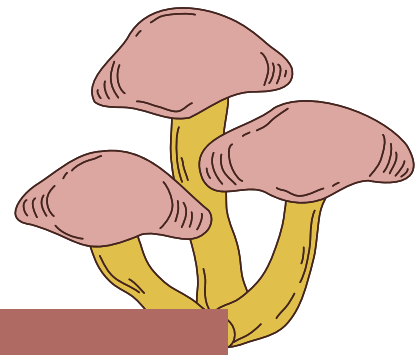


Mentoring Philosophy

Miss Yessie and other guides see their role as Mentors and guides rather than teachers. Our mentors embrace each child's unique needs and learning styles to convey social and emotional lessons and help students build deep connections to the world around them. Curriculum is child led and play & place based. It is inspired by a knowledge that children are born to learn and have an innate desire to be part of community. They are capable, and thrive under mentorship and connection.



Tuition Financial agreements



Play group Enrollments

Tuition for playgroup is an **autopay** subscription style enrollment. Your Tuition pricing is set at the time of your enrollment as agreed upon in your Jovial financial agreements. If you **do not** wish to set up auto pay you must pay per session at \$20 per session per child. No Exceptions.

Play group Pricing breakdown

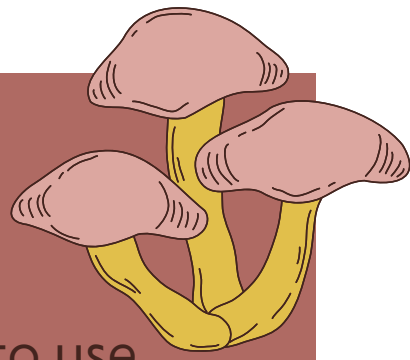
- * Play 1 time per week costs \$40/month
- * Play 2 times per week costs \$60/month
- * Play 3 times per week costs \$80/month
- * Additional siblings are \$5/month
- * Single Sessions are \$20 each per child

Enrollment Fees

When you set up your monthly enrollment there is a one-time **\$25 Non-Refundable** enrollment fee per child. For the sake of transparency: this fee helps cover the cost of supplies as well as helping to off-set the payment processing fees. Please reach out if this fee is a barrier to your enrollment, we offer waivers based on need.



Automatic payments Processing

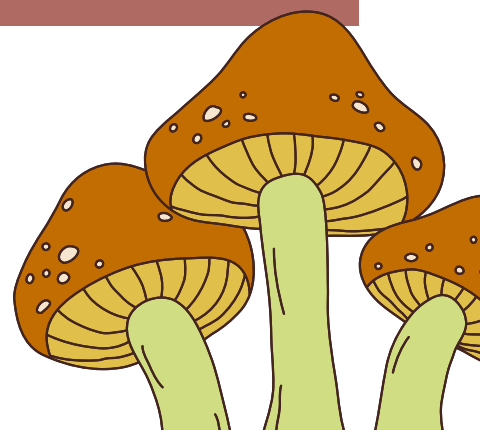
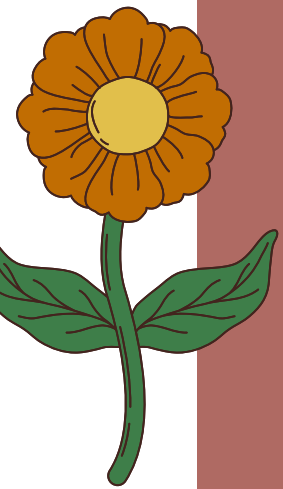


Our school has made the decision to use JOVIALS automatic payment system for ALL monthly enrollment tuition payments. Tuition is **pre-paid** at the end of the month and covers your child's outdoor education for the following month. IE: Tuition for April is paid at the end of March.

Payments for the month begin processing on the 27th each month, you will receive automatic reminder emails prior to transactions.

Cancelations

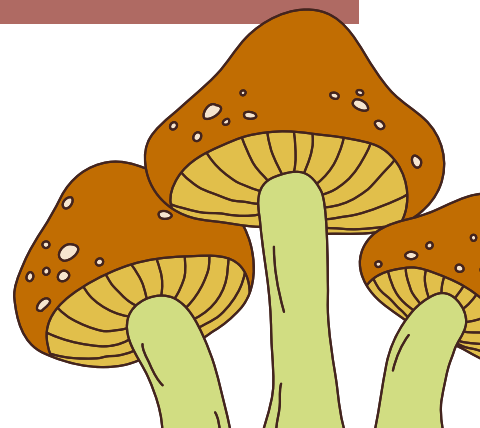
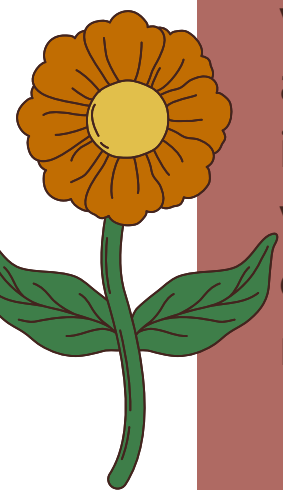
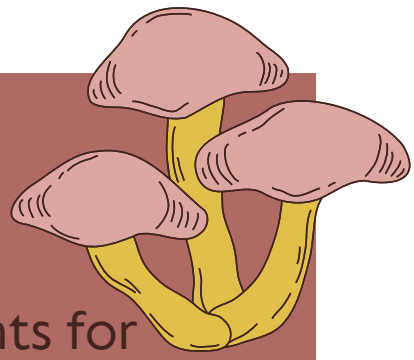
You may cancel your enrollment at any time, by giving at **least 14 days' notice** of your intent to cancel. There is no contract. However, if you cancel and decide to re-enroll later you will pay a new enrollment fee. We recommend pausing or skipping months rather than cancelling.



Due Dates and Late Fees


Monthly enrollment tuition payments for each month are due in full by 1st of the month. Tuition paid on the first of the month covers all sessions for that current month. Our school has made the decision to use JOVIALS automatic payment system for ALL monthly enrollment tuition payments. Automatic payments can be set up using ACH or credit card.

If tuition is not received by the close of the 5th day of the month, and if prior arrangements have not been discussed and agreed upon with Blackberry Academy program director Yessie Verbena, a \$10 fee will be enacted for each session your child attends without payment. If \$50 in late fees is incurred, your child's outdoor education will be postponed until account becomes current. Payment arrangements may be made. Communication is key.









Absences, late arrivals, vacation and school closures



There is no discount, refund, or other allowance for absence, illness, vacation, late arrivals, school closures, or any other reason.

Your monthly tuition covers the below session minimums based on your selected enrollment. This means we agree to HOST play group at least these many sessions per month. If group is cancelled on one of your days, you are welcomed to join a group later in the week as a “Make up day” Failure to attend make up days does not constitute a refund. Refunds will be given in the instance that Blackberry Academy is unable to host group for your monthly session minimums. Refunds will be prorated based on the number of cancelled sessions.

Playgroup session minimums

-  Play 1 x per week minimum is 3 sessions per month
 -  Play 2 x per week minimum is 6 sessions per month
 -  Play 3 x per week minimum is 9 sessions per month
- 

Toddler flexibility clause

We have set the pricing structure with flexibility in mind. You pick your primary play day or days and make a best effort to attend group on those days. If, however you miss a day due to illness or toddler meltdowns, you may arrange a “make up” day later in the week.

School grounds Map

We meet @ 9:30am near the little school bus icon for group. If you arrive late you will have to call Miss Yessie OR follow the sounds of toddler laughter.

Blackberry Academy Map

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Pollinator garden |  Backpack tree |
|  School garden plot |  Creek access point |
|  Pick up & Drop off |  Primary play areas |



Health & Safety Agreements

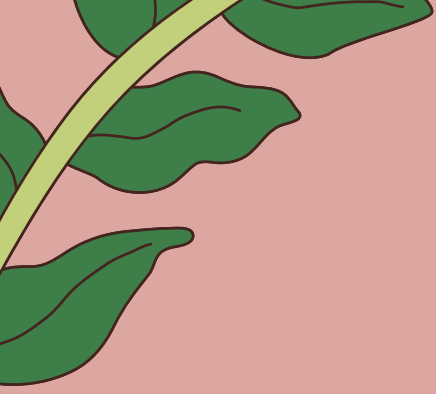
For the health and safety of all students and staff please do not bring your child to Group if:

- They have had a fever in the last 24 hours
- They have vomited in the last 48 hours
- Your child has had unexplained Diarrhea for more than 48hrs
- Your child has brightly colored green or yellow discharge.
- Your child has an uncontrollable cough. coughs linger with littles, we get it. Please send them with a mask, cough drops, or give medication prior to school to control lingering coughs.
- Your child has an unexplained spotted rash or any crusty/goopy eye discharge or red/pink eye issues
- Your child or anyone in your household has tested positive for or is suspected to have covid19. (Please do not return to school until your house has been covid free for 5 days)

We expect that families have done a health and safety check PRIOR to drop off. By Dropping off your child you are agreeing that your child is healthy and there is NO known risk of viral or contagion spread to staff or students.

If your child develops symptoms while at school you will be contacted to pick up your child.

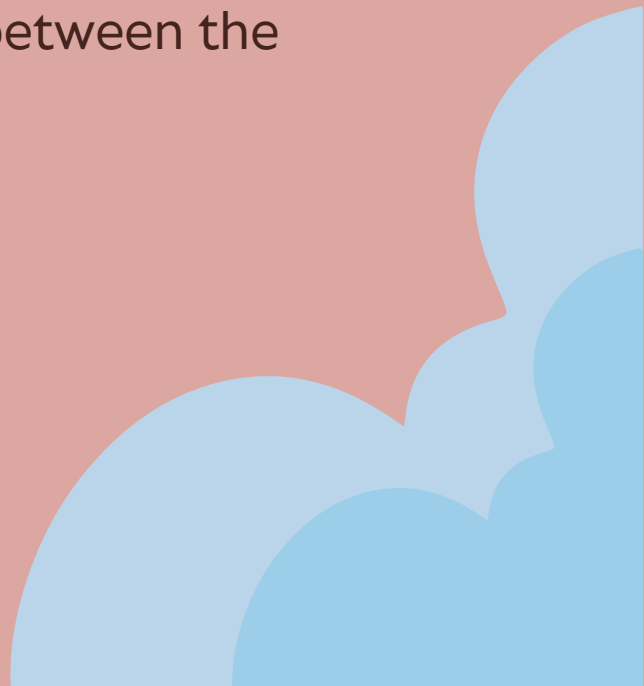




Student suspensions

While we hope we never have to enact this Blackberry Academy reserves the right to temporarily or permanently suspend any student, under any circumstances deemed to be interfering with the health, safety, or educational development of the child or fellow students.

Blackberry Academy further reserves the right to deny continued enrollment or re-enrollment to any student if staff reasonably conclude that the actions of that student's parent or guardian are inconsistent or in nonsupport of the educational environment, or counterproductive to a positive working relationship between the School and parent/guardian.





The Dirt On Gear

My Key Points for gear

1. **Waterproof boots**- I recommend bogs [3 Season Boots](#) with wool socks they keep little feet comfortable and dry for most of the year. You may request a school discount code that will give you 40% off bogs.

2. **non cotton base layers**- think wool or polyester and skintight

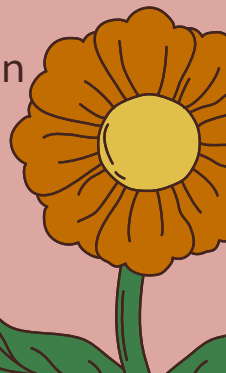
3. **mid layer should provide insulation**- think puffy down or fleece jackets and pants

4. **Outer layer should be waterproof** - Not water resistant there's a big difference and toddlers will bust right through the water-resistant layer. Opt for **two-piece bibs style** choices not full body suits if possible. This allows you more flexibility to adjust the jackets for the season.

5. **Mittens. Not gloves**, mittens are warmer than gloves. Select mittens with zippers or Velcro all the way to the thumb hole so you can see where to put that wiggle little thumb. I keep a class set of unlined waterproof mittens so don't worry about finding waterproof mittens.

*I know most littles won't wear mittens for long. But it's about practice. My recommendation is to keep your mittens in the house with their toys so they can get lots of practice using them when it doesn't matter. That way they are not a new experience when it does matter. Have them practice pinching your nose with "crabby claws" or other creative games like mitten monster chase ect.

Bonus tip: Get an extra tote and blanket to have in the car trunk for after class. So you can peel off the muddy gear and toss it all in the tote then wrap that little peanut up nice and cozy.





The Dirt On Gear

Videos and links

This is a great video on layering for outdoor school. Please watch this as it perfectly explains how to dress for school.

<https://youtu.be/XOWtQRMIZOI?feature=shared>

This [Layering Guide](#) article is also a wonderful resource and [Outdoor school shop](#) has the highest quality outdoor school gear; most of this stuff will last through 3-4 "hand-me-downs" before even showing signs of wear. I trust every single product on this site, I would highly recommend ordering gear from this site.

Didricksons and **Remia** are my go-to brand choices.

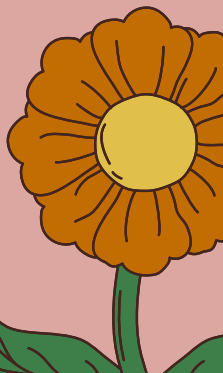
(This link should give you a \$10 coupon

https://i.refs.cc/QgfQeAzL?smile_ref=eyJzbWlsZV9zb3VyY2UiOiJzbWlsZV91aSlslNtaWxIX2lZGl1bSl6lilsInNtaWxIX2NhbnBhaWduljoicmVmZXJyYWxfchJvZ3JhbSlslNtaWxIX2N1c3RvbWVyX2lkIjoyNTEyMjQ4NzEzfQ%3D%3D

Here is an **amazon list** of gear options that I have used and recommend. You are welcome to purchase anything you like but this list should give you an idea of what we are looking for.

<https://a.co/5LNjgxu>

[Bogs boots](#) are the best all around waterproof boot option. The 3-season boot is great fall, winter and spring. Then we would switch to a closed toe sandal or a tennis shoe/hiking shoe



Recommended reading



- **Last Child in the Woods**

By Richard Louv

An excellent guide to “Saving our children from Nature deficit disorder”

- **How to raise a wild child**

By Scott D. Sampson

This one is full of practical tips on how to be a good nature mentor for your child during all stages of their development.

- **The whole brained child**

By Daniel Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson

This single book could change your entire perspective and experience of parenting and childcare.

- **The Anxious Generation**

By Jonatha Haidt

This Book will affirm your decision to enroll in outdoor school withing the first 15 pages. Beware though- it’s full of grim statistics about the direction our society is heading.

- **Elevating childcare**

By Janet Landsbury

A beautiful guide to respectful parenting.





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