



Family Handbook (updated 8/28/24)

We are so pleased to welcome your family into the community! Here at Spencer Creek Farm School, we provide responsive and engaged care for children ages 36 months to 5 years old. Children in diapers are welcome. We offer natural, open-ended materials for children to engage with, shining a focus on outdoor education, gardening, care of farm animals, sustainability, and building community. By providing an environment that encourages collaboration, natural growth, and love, we strive to enrich children's lives in such a way that they are inspired to become life-long learners. We, as teachers, aim to bridge the gap between school life and home by fostering open, authentic communication with each family. We are here to listen, collaborate, and nurture the whole child and our bonds with their families.

Farm Work and Gear:

We go outside in all of the amazing Oregon weather! We splash in puddles, dig in the mud, climb over logs, plant trees, harvest in the garden, feed chickens, ducks, and sheep, get covered in paint and bread dough- the list goes on! Needless to say, we ask that your child arrives at school in clothes that can get dirty, painted, and stained. We spend our indoor time barefoot and ask that your child has outdoor shoes that are appropriate for the weather- sandals are okay as long as they have a closed toe and a secure back strap (no flip-flops or the like). Your child will also need to have weather appropriate changes of clothes that stay in their cubby at school, as well as indoor slippers if desired, rain boots and a full rainsuit (there are great options to buy used gear on sites such as REI Used Gear, Kidizen, Poshmark, BST Facebook groups). Please be sure to check your child's cubby each day at pick up to take inventory of what needs to be replaced or updated for the next day. Please be sure that your child's personal belongings and toys stay safely at home. We have so much to explore with here at school, and don't want special personal items to get lost or

damaged. Should one of the school toys or materials accidentally hop in a pocket and take a ride home with your child (toys do like to do that from time to time :), you may simply bring it back the next day and help it find its home in back in the classroom.

Meals

We strongly believe in the importance of sharing meals together as a group. We provide a morning snack that the children are invited to enjoy together at our community table. Our snacks are always vegetarian, made with organic ingredients, and are either sourced from here on the farm that the children tend to or from local farms/distributors whenever possible. We have the pleasure of baking with our resident baker, Morgan, and will get to enjoy the fruits of our labor often.

We will have lunch at school that the children bring from home. In an effort to conserve and reduce the amount of waste produced here on the farm, we encourage families to pack lunches in reusable containers and without packaging, ideally ones that the children are able to open and close themselves. We do not have the capacity to heat food nor to store lunches in a refrigerator so please pack food that you'd like to keep warm in something like a thermos and pack an ice pack to keep things cool if necessary. In keeping with our belief that children are intuitive eaters, we talk about all food as good food that nourishes our bodies in different ways. We do not tell children how much or what to eat, as they are capable of taking agency over their own bodies. Please only pack foods that you are comfortable with your child eating as much or as little as they choose.

Birthdays/Holidays:

We love celebrating together! On your child's birthday, we will have a special time to celebrate your child during our morning gathering. We encourage you to bring in a photograph of your child for each year of their life that we may show. We will reach out as your child's birthday is nearing and ask for your help in creating a short birthday story for us to tell during their celebration. In lieu of bringing an edible treat to share with the class, we would love for your child to bring a book to donate to the classroom library. Pre-loved books are very welcome! Children feel such a sense of importance when they can see something in their classroom that they got to choose and give.

We take time to celebrate and welcome the coming and going of the seasons. Though we, the teachers, don't necessarily focus on specific holidays, we

warmly welcome and encourage families to come in and share the traditions and celebrations that are important to their family culture and customs with the children. Please speak with Emily to coordinate a time to come share with the school. We really value family participation and connection!

Schedule and Rates:

In keeping with our vision to create a warm community atmosphere, we aim to build a small cohort of 8-10 children that attend the same schedule each week together. The consistency of this model supports the creation of strongly bonded relationships between the children, the teachers, and the families.

Our program consists of 4 half days and operates **Monday through Thursday from 9:00am-1:00pm**. At this time, we are offering 3 schedule options:

2024/25 Fall Term Rates (reflecting a 6% increase):

Full-time = 4 days per week \$742/month

Part-time= 3 days per week \$583/month

Half-time= 2 days per week \$424/month

** Tuition rates are subject to a yearly increase of 3-6%, but that rate may differ. Families will be notified of the increase in the Spring before rates change for Summer/Fall.

** We offer a 10% sibling discount. The reduced rate applies to the youngest sibling's tuition.

A predictable rhythm gives children a sense of security and peace. We keep a daily rhythm that has room for adaptation depending on the interests of the children on a given day. We ask that your child arrives on time each day so that they may enter the flow of the day during the time of open exploration rather than in the middle of a transition or activity. An example of our rhythm follows:

9:00-10:00- Arrival & open indoor exploration

10:00-10:20- Tidy up & snack

10:20-10:35- Group Gathering (stories, movement, and songs)

10:35-11:50- Outdoor Exploration (nature walk, garden work, free play)

12:00- 12:45- Lunch followed by free exploration & Goodbyes

Tuition:

Our tuition is based on a 10-month schedule and is a flat rate per month depending on full-time, half-time, or part-time enrollment. Tuition is due in full on the 1st day of each month. If the 1st of the month falls on a non-school day (weekend/holiday), the amount is due on the next operating school day. Payment after the 5th day of the month is considered late and will accrue a late fee of 1% of the monthly tuition dues per day until payment is received unless prior arrangements have been made with the director. [For example, if tuition is \$700 per month, the late fee would be \$7 added to the \$700 each day until the payment is made- a payment that is made 3 days late would add \$21 to the tuition, totaling the amount due at \$721.]

Tuition will be prorated if you enroll partway through the month. Tuition can be paid with a check or cash. Payment can be accepted via Venmo or credit card with an additional fee- *see below*:

Venmo and Credit Card Payment Policy:

Effective 6/15/23, a 1.9% fee will need to be added to your total before completing payment via Venmo. Adding the fee to the total will be *your* responsibility when paying with Venmo. If you make a payment via credit card, the 2.6% fee will be added to your total for you. There are no fees for payments paid via check or cash.

Venmo example:

If your normal tuition is \$742/month:

1.9% fee is $0.019 \times 742 = \$14.10$

$742 + 14.10 = \mathbf{\$714.10}$

Credit Card example:

If your normal tuition is \$742/month:

2.6% fee is $0.026 \times 742 = \$19.29$

$742 + 19.29 = \mathbf{\$719.29}$

*** **Regardless** of absence, planned or unplanned school closures, planned vacations, or unplanned time off, tuition is always due **in full** on the 1st school day of the month. If you have plans to be away when tuition is due, please make arrangements ahead of time with the school to create a payment plan. Tuition is what keeps your child's spot in the school and is what keeps the school running.

We are here for you. Should you experience a shift in financial security, please reach out to Emily and she will work with you to create a solution.

Toileting:

All children are welcome at any stage in their toileting journey, including children who use diapers, regardless of their age. We follow the belief that there is no such thing as toilet "training", rather, there is the concept of toilet "learning" and being an independent toilet user. A quote from a renowned Child Development specialist, Robin Einzig of Visible Child, really resonates with our approach to toileting- "Toilet *learning*" is a thing. They learn it. We set the stage...We serve as models...But learning is something that goes on in our children's brains. We are not in charge of it." (A link to Robin Einzig's Visible Child website is linked in the "Resources" section of our website. We strongly encourage you to take time to browse through her work- she is phenomenal!)

Some may find this controversial, but we promise you, children learn to use the toilet when *they* are ready, not when *we* are...as frustrating as that can feel sometimes. We do not require that children be independent toilet users in order join our school community, and as such, we do not practice toilet "training". We are here to support children and to meet them where they are at, so if that means they are using the toilet independently, great! And if they aren't, also great and we are here to support that child-led journey!

For clarification, we consider a child as independently using the toilet as one who reads their body's cues and takes themselves to the toilet without relying on adult reminders, is able (within reason) to push down and pull up their own underwear/pants and is practiced in or learning to wipe themselves. If a child is new to wearing underwear and is requiring frequent adult reminders to use the toilet, resulting in frequent pee or poop accidents, we do not consider the child as independently using the toilet and ask that they use training pants (pull ups, or the like) until they are getting all of their pee and poop into the toilet without reminders. The key here is that when a child is ready, both physically and emotionally, to use the toilet, they will! That's it!

If your child uses diapers, you will be responsible for providing their diapers and a small blanket (such as a cotton receiving blanket) that we will use as a changing pad cover for your child. The blanket will remain and be laundered at the school. We provide fragrance-free wet wipes, but please feel free to provide your own if you have a preference.

Communication:

We strongly believe in the power of open communication. We are here to support the whole child and their families. In order to do so, we very much encourage you to participate in open communication with the teachers. Please do share information such as the amount of sleep your child got the night prior, the loss of a family member or pet, a transition in routine or living circumstances, divorce/separation/change in custody, and extended visitors in the home. These are all very valuable pieces of information that help to paint a picture of what your child may be experiencing and processing. When we know this information, we can even better support your child in the unique ways they may be needing at the time.

Brief updates may be shared with the teachers during drop off, but please note that when children are present, our biggest priority is to be attentive to them and respectful of their emotions and autonomy. If your family is experiencing something that may require privacy and/or a longer period of time to discuss, please email, call, or text Emily to schedule a distraction free time to communicate.

Twice a year, we will provide an opportunity for families to sign up for a scheduled conference that allows the time to connect with your Emily about your child's exciting developments. This will also give a safe space for families to ask questions and voice any concerns they may have. This is not the only time that families may set up time to connect outside of school hours. As always, please reach out anytime to set up a chat should any questions or concerns arise.

*** Please never hesitate to reach out to us for support- whether it pertains to your child, your family, or yourself. We are on your side and are here to help. We will do everything in our power to ensure that your child and your family receive the assistance and care they need. All information shared with us will absolutely be kept in strict confidentiality and will only be shared in compliance with our responsibilities tied to being mandated reporters with the state of Oregon.

Arrivals and Departures:

School starts at 9:00 am. We ask that your child arrive on time so that they may ease into their school day during the time of Open Exploration. If your child will be late, a quick text to the school is appreciated. Only people on your child's approved pick up list may pick your child up from school. If you arrange for someone else to pick your child up that is not on the list, you must communicate with the school beforehand, and the person must provide a valid ID at the time of pick up. To ensure the absolute safety of your child, should someone arrive to pick your child up that isn't on the approved list and has not been specified as an approved pick up person in communication with a teacher that day, we **will not** send your child with them, that person will be asked to leave, and your family will be contacted immediately.

As stated in the statutes for Recorded Preschool Programs, the school may operate for no more than four (4) hours per day. As such, no child may be on the school premises for **any amount** of time before or after the operating hours of 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. A late fee of the amount of one (1) dollar per minute past 1:00 pm will be due at the time of pick up. Multiple instances of late pick up will constitute a termination of your child's contract with the school, thus terminating their enrollment.

We encourage you to arrive fifteen (15) minutes early, at 12:45pm, to pick up your child to ensure enough time to gather your child's belongings, sign your child out, greet other children and their families, briefly check in with the teacher, allow your child time to show you their interests of the day, and to say goodbye.

** If the school is found to be in violation of these time constraints, the school may face penalties and even closure- so it is vital that you please be on time!

School Closures/Emergency Contacts:

In the event that the school must be closed on an unscheduled day, your family will be contacted ASAP via email and text message. Please send a response so that the staff know that you have received the information. In the event of an emergency, your family will be contacted via phone call. If your family does not answer, we will move through the list of emergency contacts that you provide in your paperwork.

Air Quality Monitoring Policy:

Due to the potential for encountering poor air quality, and because of the importance of putting the safety of children and staff first, Spencer Creek Farm School has created the following policies in concurrence with the reported air quality index (AQI) in our area. These policies will be updated and amended as needed. (Updated 8-07-24)

Because of the nature of a yurt's structure, there is a possibility for gaps to occur between the outer vinyl membrane and inside insulation which means our yurt may not be airtight. We will be monitoring the **indoor** AQI at all times during smoke and unhealthy air quality events to determine the safety of conducting school inside the yurt. We have a PurpleAir PM2.5 monitor inside of the school yurt and that will guide the decision-making process of whether or not to open school. See our location on the map at

<https://map.purpleair.com/1/mAQI/a10/p604800/cC0#13.07/43.98364/-123.15606>

For determining the safety of outdoor activities at school, we will be monitoring the one-hour average of outdoor AQI using the map above, focusing on the sensor at Twin Oaks Elementary School and the sensor on McBeth Road, as well as other nearby sensors on the map.

Indoor AQI Policy:

At least 1 hour prior to the opening to school, we will check the indoor AQI on our sensor.

- If the indoor AQI is 101 or above, school will be **cancelled**. Families will be notified of school cancellation via email and text message at least 1 hour prior to the opening time of school. If you do not receive a text or email notifying you that school is cancelled, it means that school is open as usual.
- Should the indoor AQI start out okay in the morning, but decline past 100 while the children are present, school will be **cancelled**, and families will be contacted via phone call to come pick their child(ren) up from school immediately.
- When the indoor AQI is in the 'Moderate' category of 51-100, school will remain open and operating- all windows and doors shall remain closed, and a high-quality true HEPA air purifier will be activated inside. Please consider your comfortability with that range of air quality and make the decision to bring your child(ren) to school accordingly.

Outdoor AQI Policy:

- If outdoor AQI is Good (0-50)- all outdoor activities will be conducted as usual.
- If outdoor AQI is Moderate (51-100)- the length of outdoor activities will be shortened in length and lessened in intensity.
- If outdoor AQI is Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups and above (101-300)- all outside activities will be moved inside.
- If outdoor AQI is in the Hazardous category (300+), school will be **cancelled/closed** due to the likelihood of the indoor AQI becoming Unhealthy with the opening and closing of the door for arrivals and departures.

Make-up Days

- If school is cancelled 3 or more times due to poor AQI during Summer Session, make-up days may be offered on selected Fridays, granted we have the staffing to do so. We do not make adjustments to tuition.
- If school is cancelled 2 or more times due to poor AQI during one billing month during the normal school year, make-up days will be offered on selected Fridays. We do not make adjustments to tuition.

*** Please consider your comfortability with the policies that are written in accordance with the ranges of air quality when making the decision to bring your child(ren) to school. Make-up days will not be offered to children who are kept at home due to AQI when the school is determined to be open and operating.

Sick Policy and Absence:

We prioritize health and safety at school. With such a close cohort, illnesses are likely to make their rounds through the school. In the effort of minimizing the spread of illness and disease, we ask that your child **stay home** if they are sick or exhibiting symptoms of illness. Our classroom is an active place and not a comfortable place for a sick child. Home is the best place for them to be cared for through their illness. In the case that your child becomes ill while at school, we will first contact your family. If your family has not been reached, the emergency contacts will be notified. If you are keeping your child home due to illness, injury, or another reason, please update the school via email, phone call, or text.

Please help protect the health of the class by keeping your child at home if they have a colored discharge, constant cough, diarrhea, fever, and/or symptoms that display a communicable disease. To return to school, please ensure your child is back to feeling like themselves and without symptoms. Children must be without fever for a **full 24 hours** without the aid of fever reducing medication (such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen), and without vomiting or diarrhea for a **full 48** hours.

If your child has contracted a communicable disease, please let the school know so that the class can be advised (anonymously) of the illness and its symptoms. In the case that your child has been exposed to a communicable disease, but is not displaying symptoms, please still let the school know so that the class can be informed of what symptoms may appear. Let's work together to keep everyone healthy and to keep the school open!

Make-up days are **not** offered for absence or school closures due to illness of the children or staff.

COVID-19 Response:

We follow the recommendations and protocol from the CDC regarding COVID-19 outbreaks in the school. Should your child, or **anyone else in your household** contract COVID-19, please stay home and inform the school.

Parent/Guardian Agreement:

It is a policy of the State Board of Education and a priority of Spencer Creek Farm School that there will be no discrimination or harassment on the grounds of race, color, sex, marital status, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability in any educational programs, activities or employment.

Spencer Creek Farm School is a Recorded Preschool Program through the Oregon Department of Early Learning. Our facility is fully insured, and all teachers and volunteers are enrolled in the Office of Child Care's Central Background Registry. For more information about recorded and licensed programs, please contact the Office of Child Care at 503-947-1400 or 1-800-556-6616.

Upon enrollment, a non-refundable deposit is due in the amount of \$50 in order to secure your child's spot. This deposit will be applied toward the first month of tuition. A materials fee in the amount of \$100 is also due at the time of enrollment. In the event that a family reserves a spot and then later drops

out (before their child's first day of school), their security deposit will be retained, but the materials fee will be returned. The first month of tuition is due on or before their first day of school.

This contract of enrollment is an at will contract. You have the right to withdraw your child from the school at any time for any reason, and as such, we have the right to terminate your child's contract at any time for any reason. In the event that you choose to withdraw your child's enrollment before the end of the school year, you are obligated to provide a 30-day notice. Tuition for your child's last 30 days is due **whether or not** they attend any of those days, including cases where the school deems it necessary that your child no longer attend any of those 30 days.

**** Please retain this packet for referencing and for your records ****