



WILLOW LEARNING HOUSE
— *Supporting Homeschoolers* —

Handbook 2024-2025

Teacher Bio

Hi! I'm Claire.

I always wanted to be a teacher, but I completed my education more slowly than most (as I had a few kids along the way). During my undergraduate degree, I studied History and Political Science. I have always been fascinated with these subjects, since I love learning about all the different ways that humans and societies have existed throughout time and space! I finally completed my Bachelor of Education at the University of the Fraser Valley in Abbotsford, B.C. in the spring of 2020 (and in the looming shadow of Covid-19). Shortly thereafter, in a series of unlikely events, we found ourselves on the adventure of a lifetime: six humans, two pets, and a small trailer of our most valued possessions traversing this mighty country we call home! Like many others that we have met in Nova Scotia, we were looking for a fresh start and a chance to escape the proverbial hamster wheel.

By this time, I was sure that the public school system was not an environment in which my daughters were thriving. I was also sure that I would not thrive in it either! As a teacher, it is important to me to have open communication with the parents of my students. I believe that a child's education is, ideally, a team effort by a range of trusted adults. More importantly, however, is the importance of the child's ownership over his or her learning. This requires the flexibility to lean into student interest and allow plenty of time for inquiry and exploration. The strict "expected outcomes", tight budgets and rigid bell schedules of public schools work directly against these ideals.

I am passionate about providing students with long-lasting life skills such as: problem solving; critical thinking; public speaking (and listening); leadership; self-confidence; conflict resolution; strength in spelling, writing, and reading; and strong numeracy skills. Willow Learning House promises a high student-teacher ratio, continuous and quality communication between teacher and parents, and a student-led approach to learning that meets each child where he or she is at and encourages individualized personal and academic growth in a democratic and inclusive environment designed to complement home learning.

I am so grateful for all of your support! I am living my dream and I hope to run this little school until I retire!! I am so happy to be able to offer a program that builds support and community for homeschoolers, and even works as an alternative to public school for some! Welcome to the family! This year is going to be a blast!!

Educational Principles

At Willow Learning House, we foster an eclectic approach to education, combining traditional and modern approaches to learning, both socially and academically. Here are some of our guiding principles:

Principle #1- We are a low-tech environment. We believe that most children's lives are thoroughly saturated with "screen time". Sadly, there is no shortage of studies to prove the detrimental effects that this is causing in many areas of child development.

Principle #2- We believe that every person has a unique learning style and rhythm. Students in our program will be encouraged to progress at their own pace. We may use grade levels as benchmarks but children will perform above, at, or below their "expected" level without shame or pressure.

Principle #3- We are HANDS ON when it comes to learning! We believe that everyone learns better when they get a chance to touch, taste, feel, see, hear, and share what they are learning. Students in our program will research, experiment, discuss, and create throughout their discovery of each topic studied.

Principle #4- We have small, multi-aged classes. Our classes will never exceed 16 students and will always have at least one "extra helper" to assist the teacher. Multi-aged classes allow us to group children with those who are academically matched as well as offering many beautiful opportunities for mentorship.

Principle #5- We believe in the power of play. Some of the most important developmental milestones are most easily mastered through play. We strive to ensure that our students have access to this important unstructured time with their peers.

Principle #6- We believe that families should have a say in how their school operates. As much as possible, program decisions will be discussed with parents and children. We are a growing and evolving community, so it is important that our operation is flexible.

Principle #7- We believe that conflict resolution is a skill. Like any skill, it will improve with practice. Students will be incited to work together and to come up with their own solutions, when faced with conflicts.

Principle #8- We encourage “risky” play. Children in our program will be allowed to explore their physical limits, under teacher discretion. Climbing trees, building forest forts, and games that involve jumping the ditch are all common occurrences during outdoor play.

Principle #9- We respect values that are taught at home. We strongly applaud critical thinking and respect for diversity among our students. Our program will never seek to push specific political or religious views of any kind.

Principle #10- We prioritize kindness, safety, and inclusion.

Our Daily and Weekly Schedule

****see notes on next page****

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00	Drop off	Drop off	Drop off	Drop off
9:15	Math	Math	Math	Math
10:00	Break	Break	Break	Break
10:15	ELA	ELA	ELA	ELA
11:00	Drama	Drama	Drama	Drama
11:45	Lunch/ Free time	Lunch/ Free time	Lunch/ Free time	Lunch/ Free time
12:45	Circle Meeting	Circle Meeting	Circle Meeting	Circle Meeting
1:30	Science	Geography	History	Art
2:30	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
3:00	Pick up	Pick up	Pick up	Pick up
3:30	Paint or Clay	Board Games	STEM Challenge	Active Games
4:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
5:00	Pick up	Pick up	Pick up	Pick up

Scheduling Notes

- Younger children are not expected to participate in structured schoolwork beyond their attention span. Allotted times are designed to accommodate older students. For example, a five year old may “do History” for twenty minutes and then have playtime until we begin the next subject.
- Young children can benefit academically from listening to (or overhearing) class discussions and from observing the work of the older students, even when they are not participating directly!
- Scheduling for the CORE block (from 11:00-3:00) is very flexible. For example, we may occasionally have a large exploration that is the sole focus of the afternoon or make the decision to change up a routine that has become stale. Whenever possible, students will be given a “heads up” regarding changes. We all know that there are some who do not like surprises!

Math Year Overview

On Wednesdays and Fridays, Math for Grades Primary through 3 will follow the outline below (at their grade level).

Grades 4 and up will have a combination of related activities (when beneficial) and independent workbooks.

September	Numeracy Part 1
October	Money with Entrepreneur project
November	Money with Entrepreneur project
December	Numeracy Part 2
January	Measurement- Time (+calendar and word problems)
February	Measurement- Weight (+word problems and really big numbers)
March	Measurement- Length (+area and perimeter and word problems)
April	Numeracy Part 3
May	Geometry with Hands-on project
June	Geometry with Hands-on project

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, Math will consist mainly of independent work books. Exceptions will be made for the Entrepreneur project, the Geometry project, and occasional science connections.

English Language Arts Year Overview

For English Language Arts, we will use the Layers of Learning Writer's Workshop. This will consist of 10 minutes of word work/spelling, followed by a 10 minute mini grammar lesson. The remainder of the time will be focused on writing. Students will be guided through the writing process and then proceed to use this approach to study various styles of writing. This curriculum is designed to be used across a wide range of ages and abilities and focuses on fostering a love of writing within a growth mindset.

We will continue to have spelling words and weekly spelling tests (on Thursdays and Fridays). However, we will be using a more mastery based approach than previous years. This means that word lists will be individually tailored and that students will see words that were not mastered repeated in the following week's test. The word lists are a mix of spelling patterns and commonly used words. Your child will be given the list for the full school year and will check off words that have been mastered. Mini assessments will take place over the first week of classes to place students at an appropriate level. Please note that the word work levels in this curriculum are not grade levels, they are merely numbered for the sake of organization. It is highly recommended that part-time students practice spelling words at home, throughout the week.

It has been a difficult choice, but I have decided to focus on writing skills this year, at the expense of focusing on reading. Children benefit immensely from daily shared reading, but I feel that this is something that is most easily done in a more individual setting, at home. Please continue to give your child many opportunities to read alone, read to you, and to be read to. Students and parents may now borrow materials from our library. There is a large selection of phonetic readers available for those just starting out. If you would like suggestions or guidance on this subject, please feel free to chat with me!

The entire Layers of Learning curriculum is available in hardcopy in our classroom. If you are curious about the breakdown, or the scope, please feel free to look through it. We will work on each topic for 4-6 weeks.

Reporting

All students at Willow Learning House are considered to be registered homeschoolers. Whether they attend our program full time or part time, the parent has assumed the legal responsibility for their child's education. Please ensure that your child is registered annually with the Nova Scotia Ministry of Education and that you submit the required annual end of year report.

Willow Learning House will issue a progress report for your child at the end of the winter term in December, and at the end of the spring term in June. No grades will be given by our establishment. The report will include "two stars and a wish" for the child, as well as a brief summary of academics that the child has worked on. Parents are welcome to use these accounts as a guide when submitting their June report to the Ministry.

As always, please reach out with any questions or concerns!

Calendar Year Overview

September 10, 2024	First Day of Fall Term
November 23, 2024	CDRC Christmas Craft Fair Entrepreneur Project Expose
December 20, 2024	Last Day of Fall Term
	Christmas Break
January 7, 2025	First Day of Winter Term
February 9, 2025	Second Annual Talent Show
March 7, 2025	Last Day of Winter Term
	March Break
March 17, 2025	First Day of Spring Term
May 25, 2025	Theatrical Production
June 27, 2025	Last Day of Spring Term

This is a brief overview of the most important dates for the upcoming school year. I will continue to send out monthly newsletters that will include field trips and spirit days (and reminders about larger events mentioned above).

Payment Policies

Student registration is for the term specified on the registration form. It is usually possible to make small changes, as needed. It is much easier on both teacher and student to have as much notice as possible.

Invoices will be sent out by email around the 20th of each month. Full payment for each month is due by the first of that month. E transfers can be sent to:

claire@willowlearninghouse.ca

If you are experiencing financial hardship, please reach out to me as soon as possible so that we can work out an arrangement. However, repeated late and/or missed payments will result in student expulsion from the program.

Missed Day Policies

- If the teacher is ill, classes will be canceled. Canceled days will be deducted from the invoice for the following month.
- If there is inclement weather, we will follow this procedure:
 - 7:00 am Facebook group chat check in (text for those who are not in the chat)
 - 7:00-7:30 am Parents vote for or against school cancelation
 - 7:30 am The decision will be made!
 - (If 50% of students are not attending, classes will be canceled.)
 - Please note that no refund will be issued for inclement weather days.
- If a student misses class due to illness, appointments, or vacation, no refund will be issued.

Signature of Parent/Guardian:

Date:

Special Permissions

These are mostly for older students. Please check any or all that apply and sign below to confirm parental permission. Thank you!

- ☐ My child (over 10) has permission to play outside, within the confines of the park area, without direct teacher supervision. (Teacher is inside.)
- ☐ My child (over 10) has permission to play inside, without direct teacher supervision. (Teacher is outside)
- ☐ My child (over 10) has permission to leave the classroom at the end of the day without parent-teacher contact. (A parent is waiting in the parking lot or the child is walking home.)
- ☐ My child has permission to check their cell phone, briefly, during free play times. I understand that, due to the multi-age and low-tech nature of our program, students will be expected to keep phones and other devices in their lockers during the majority of the day.
- ☐ My child has permission to purchase snacks from our new snack store.

Please add any further details below:

Student Name:

Signature of Parent/Guardian:

Date:

Registration Agreements Page 1

Program registration requires you to grant and waive certain legal rights as outlined in the following agreements.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In case of accident, injury, or illness involving the Participant in which Willow Learning House staff are unable to contact the primary and emergency contacts, **I hereby authorize and grant permission to Willow Learning House staff to secure proper medical treatment**, and authorize on the Participant's behalf all procedures, including, without limitation, admission to an emergency unit, hospital, and treatment therein as deemed necessary by the attending medical professional(s). I agree not to hold Willow Learning House responsible for any costs or injury arising out of an emergency situation.

I give permission to Willow Learning House to transport the Participant off site property for the purpose of medical care if necessary.

ASSUMPTION OF RISK & PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

While Willow Learning House makes every reasonable effort to minimize exposure to known risks associated with each Participant's participation in Willow Learning House programs, **I hereby acknowledge that my child may participate in various physical activities that involve risk of injury**. In this regard, I agree that I have provided a complete and accurate health history and hereby permit the Participant to participate in the full range of program activities.

In consideration of the Participant's opportunity to participate in the program, I hereby release and forever discharge Willow Learning House, its respective officers, directors, employees, volunteers and agents, and their respective successors and assigns, from any and all liability for damages sustained in consequence of loss, injury or damage to the Participant, and from all other actions, causes, claims, demands or damages of any kind with respect to death, injury, loss or damages to any person or property arising out of/or connected with preparation for/or participation in the program.

SAFETY & CODE OF CONDUCT

The safety of each individual in the program is of the utmost importance at Willow Learning House. Each Participant must recognize a personal responsibility to learn and follow the safety rules established by Willow Learning House. **I hereby agree that any behaviour the Participant exhibits that places him/herself or others at risk may result in the immediate dismissal of the Participant from the program. I hereby acknowledge and agree that no refund will be granted for such a dismissal.**

Registration Agreements Page 2

PHOTO/VIDEO CONSENT & RELEASE

For marketing, advertising, promotional and/or communication purposes, Willow Learning House may take photos and/or video recordings of Willow Learning House activities that include real people. **I hereby agree to allow photos and/or videos to be taken of my child while attending and/or participating in Willow Learning House activities.** These photos/videos may be used on any other medium without any remuneration. I agree that Willow Learning House has sole ownership and exclusive rights to these photos/videos including copyright and financial rights. These photos/videos will not be sold or used by third parties. I agree that I will not bring or consent to others to bring a claim or action against Willow Learning House for any reason with regard to these photos/videos.

PRIVACY POLICY

Willow Learning House does not sell or give out your personal information. All information collected is used solely for registration purposes, statistical assessment, and contact with parents, guardians and program participants.

REGISTRATION AGREEMENT

By signing my name, I confirm that I am the legal parent/guardian of the Participant and consent to his/her participation in the Program. Further, I confirm I have read, understood and agree to all registration agreements, policies, and terms and conditions of registration.

Signature of Parent/Guardian:

Date: