



Elementary Programs

Our Philosophy

At Ancaster Forest & Nature School, our philosophy is rooted in the belief that nature is an extraordinary and essential teacher. This belief guides our approach from the early years through elementary education, creating a connected learning journey that nurtures each child's curiosity, confidence, creativity, and relationship with the natural world.

Grounded in the four foundations of How Does Learning Happen?—Belonging, Well-Being, Engagement, and Expression—and informed by Ontario's Kindergarten and Elementary curricula, our nature-based approach brings meaningful academic learning to life through exploration, inquiry, play, and hands-on experiences. We honour each child's unique strengths and interests while nurturing their intrinsic desire to explore, discover, and learn.

Program Vision

Our vision for the Elementary Program at Ancaster Forest & Nature School is to remain intentionally small, high-quality, and child-centred. We provide exceptional learning experiences that nurture the whole child—academically, socially, emotionally, physically, and creatively—while fostering a meaningful and lasting connection with nature.

Our program will grow thoughtfully alongside our students, adding one grade each year as they progress. This gradual approach supports continuity, stability, and strong relationships throughout each child's learning journey.

Children learn within a small, multi-age community where collaboration, mentorship, and a strong sense of belonging develop naturally. Individualized instruction and guidance meet each child at their developmental level, allowing them to build skills and understanding at a meaningful pace.

Through hands-on exploration, purposeful academic learning, and authentic experiences in nature, children develop confidence, independence, curiosity, and a deep intrinsic desire to learn.

A Holistic Experience

Our Elementary Program builds upon the nature-based foundation of Ancaster Forest & Nature School, offering a balanced educational experience that nurtures academic growth, social-emotional development, creativity, physical well-being, and a meaningful connection with the natural world.

Thoughtfully Designed Learning Environments

The forest, gardens, and outdoor classrooms provide rich opportunities for inquiry, movement, collaboration, problem-solving, and experiential learning. These experiences foster curiosity, resilience, self-regulation, and environmental responsibility.

Our beautiful, calm and thoughtfully curated indoor environments complement outdoor learning by providing space for focused engagement, creative expression, reflection, and restoration.

Curriculum and Personalized Learning

Guided by the Ontario Curriculum, and our Forest School curriculum, learning unfolds through storytelling, inquiry, outdoor exploration, hands-on experiences, and responsive teaching. This approach honours children's natural curiosity while building strong academic foundations.

Small Classes and Personalized Learning

Our Evergreen group welcomes children ages 3.5–5 and is led by a wonderful Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT), with a maximum class size of 10 children.

Our Trailblazers group welcomes children ages 5–7 and is led collaboratively by an Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT) and a Designated Early Childhood Educator (DECE), with a maximum class size of 16 children.

These intentionally small groups allow our educators to build meaningful relationships with each child and provide personalized guidance responsive to their strengths, interests, developmental level, and learning needs.

Meaningful Academic Learning

Academic learning is guided by the Ontario Curriculum and enriched through our Forest School curriculum. Literacy, numeracy, and scientific thinking are brought to life through inquiry, storytelling, baking, nature observation, creative arts, and project-based learning. These authentic experiences strengthen academic understanding while developing creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical life skills.

French Fundamentals

Children are introduced to French through songs, stories, movement, conversation, and play in both our indoor and outdoor learning environments. This joyful, developmentally responsive approach builds foundational vocabulary, communication skills, confidence, and cultural awareness.

Nourishment and Well-Being

Nutritious snacks and lunches are provided by Real Food for Real Kids, a family-owned company committed to wholesome meals made with real ingredients. RFRK prioritizes Ontario-grown foods and incorporates local and organic options into its menus whenever possible.

Children also participate in regular cooking and baking experiences, often using produce they have helped grow and harvest from our garden. These hands-on opportunities build practical life skills and deepen children's understanding of nourishment, sustainability, and where their food comes from.

All snacks and lunches are included in tuition.



The School Year

Our school day runs from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday, with extended care available from 7:30 am to 5:00 pm for families who need additional support.

Instruction begins at 9:15 am, allowing time for a calm arrival, morning routines, and free play outdoors. This gentle start supports children's social-emotional well-being and helps them transition smoothly into the day.

The school year runs from September 1st, 2026 through June 30th, 2027, and families have the option to continue their child's experience in our summer program, providing a seamless transition and ongoing opportunities for exploration and growth.

Holiday closures for 2026:

- New Year – Thursday, January 1, 2026
- Good Friday – Friday, April 3, 2026
- Easter Monday – Monday, April 6, 2026
- Victoria Day – Monday, May 18, 2026
- Canada Day – Wednesday, July 1, 2026
- Civic Holiday – Monday, August 3, 2026
- Labour Day – Monday, September 7, 2026
- Thanksgiving Day – Monday, October 12, 2026
- December 24th- January 1st, inclusive

PA Days:

- Friday November 27th, 2026

2027

- Friday February 12th, 2027
- Monday May 17th, 2027
- Friday August 27th, 2027
- Monday November 29th, 2027

We look forward to welcoming your family and supporting your child throughout their learning journey!