



## *Elementary Programs*

### *Our Philosophy*

At Ancaster Forest & Nature School, our philosophy is deeply rooted in the belief that nature is an extraordinary and essential teacher, guiding the foundation of our preschool approach. Aligned seamlessly with the four frames of the *How Does Learning Happen?* (2014) Ministry document—Belonging, Well-Being, Engagement, and Expression—our Nature-Based Philosophy is more than a commitment; it is a dedication to crafting an unparalleled early learning experience guiding children on their own journey to discovering their love of nature while nurturing their innate desire to learn.

### *Our Elementary Program Vision*

The intention of our Elementary program at Ancaster Forest & Nature School is to remain small, high-quality, and child-centered, providing extraordinary learning experiences that support the holistic development of each child—academically, socially, emotionally, and creatively.

Our Elementary program will grow gradually with our students, adding a new grade each year as our current Grade 1 students advance, ensuring continuity and stability in their learning journey.

The Elementary program is designed as a multi-aged, small-group environment, where children spanning a few years in age learn together. Each student receives individualized lessons and guidance tailored to their developmental level, allowing them to progress at their own pace while benefiting from a supportive, collaborative community of peers. Through this approach, children develop confidence, independence, and a love of learning, while enjoying the unique advantages of a nature-based, individualized, holistic educational experience.

## *A Holistic Elementary learning Experience*

At Ancaster Forest & Nature School, our Elementary program thoughtfully builds upon the strong foundation established in our nature-based child care program, continuing to support the holistic development of each child. Rooted in research-informed practice, the program offers a balanced educational experience that nurtures academic growth, social-emotional development, and personal well-being. Through meaningful, hands-on learning experiences, students are encouraged to explore, inquire, and develop a deep sense of connection to both the natural world and their learning community.

## *Nature-Based and Intentionally Designed learning Environments*

Central to our Elementary program is a strong emphasis on nature-based education. Extensive research demonstrates that regular engagement with outdoor environments supports cognitive development, reduces stress, and enhances focus and self-regulation. Our outdoor classrooms provide rich opportunities for exploration, physical activity, and experiential learning, supporting the development of motor skills, problem-solving abilities, and resilience. Learning experiences in the forest, garden, and surrounding natural spaces foster curiosity, creativity, and a growing sense of environmental responsibility.

Complementing our outdoor spaces, students also spend time in thoughtfully curated indoor environments designed to be calm, beautiful, and developmentally responsive. These indoor spaces offer a sense of rhythm and restoration, supporting focused academic work, creative expression, and reflective learning. Natural materials, soft lighting, and intentional design create an atmosphere that promotes concentration, emotional regulation, and a sense of belonging.

## *Curriculum Approach: Rooted in Wonder and Academic Foundations*

Alongside the Ontario Ministry of Education Curriculum, our Elementary program integrates our own Forest School curriculum and Story Weavers curriculum—a curiosity-led approach designed to spark meaningful conversations, inspire exploration, and keep learning feeling magical. Together, these frameworks support a holistic educational experience that honours children's natural curiosity while ensuring strong academic foundations. Learning unfolds through storytelling, inquiry, outdoor exploration, and relationship-based teaching, allowing children to make deep, meaningful connections to their learning and the world around them.

## *Small Class Sizes and Personalized learning*

With a maximum class size of 12 students, our Elementary program prioritizes individualized learning and strong educator-child relationships. Small group settings allow educators to respond intentionally to each child's strengths, interests, and learning needs. This personalized approach supports academic progress while also nurturing social competence, confidence, and emotional well-being.

## *Academic Development Through Experiential learning*

Academic learning in our Elementary program is approached through inquiry-based and experiential methods that make learning meaningful and engaging. Our Ontario Certified and skilled educators draw from the Ontario Ministry of Education Curriculum while thoughtfully weaving in Forest School and Story Weavers experiences to deepen learning. Literacy, numeracy, and scientific thinking are embedded within hands-on, real-world contexts such as baking, nature observation, storytelling, creative arts and project-based learning. These authentic experiences encourage critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving, while supporting the development of practical life skills alongside academic knowledge.

## *A Balanced and Integrated Approach to learning*

The Elementary program at Ancaster Forest & Nature School offers a rich and well-rounded educational experience that thoughtfully integrates academic learning, outdoor exploration, creative expression, and personal growth. By combining nature-based education with calm, intentionally designed indoor environments, we create conditions in which children feel grounded, inspired, and supported. Our goal is to nurture confident, curious, and compassionate learners who are equipped with the skills, resilience, and sense of wonder needed to thrive in an ever-changing world.

## *French Fundamentals Program*

The Elementary French Fundamentals program continues to introduce children to the French language in an engaging and developmentally appropriate manner. Through songs, stories, movement, and play—both outdoors and within our calm indoor learning spaces—students develop early language skills in an immersive and joyful context. This approach supports linguistic development while strengthening memory, communication skills, and cultural awareness.

## *Family-Style Dining and Holistic Well-Being*

Recognizing the integral role of nourishment in learning and development, all snacks and meals served in our Elementary program are nutritious and shared through a family-style dining model. Mealtimes are viewed as an extension of the learning environment, supporting social connection, independence, cooperation, and mindful eating. This practice reflects our holistic philosophy, in which physical, emotional, and social well-being are deeply interconnected.

All snacks and meals are included through our nutritious catering program, Real Food for Real Kids, a multiple award-winning company recognized for excellence and innovation, designed to support healthy, mindful eating while focusing on serving local, organic, and sustainably sourced foods.

## *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 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026 through June 30<sup>th</sup>, 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 24<sup>th</sup>- January 1<sup>st</sup>, inclusive

### **PA Days:**

- Monday August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026
- Friday November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2026
- Friday February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2027
- Monday May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2027

## *Tuition:*

- 2 day- \$1025
- 3 day- \$1325
- 5 day- \$1800

If you have any questions or would like more information, please don't hesitate to connect with us!