

Magic Forest School

Prospective Family Admissions Packet



Summer 2025

Magic Forest School

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Magic Forest School

Ethos:

Philosophy

At Magic Forest School we feel strongly that exploration is the key that opens the door to adventure, enlightenment, and learning; respect for the child is the key that keeps the door open. At the heart of our philosophy is respect and honor for each child's personality, style, pace, and age, as well as developmental stage. We believe and act on the belief that all children are kind, capable citizens. Indeed, all people are endowed with kindness. Interestingly, at heart, children and adults want and need the same things: to be heard and acknowledged, loved and accepted, considered, made time for, and feel special. Knowing and remembering this in each class as we act as role models, mentors, teachers, and guides helps us to create, manifest, and share our goal of 'honoring all living things, including others and ourselves'.

Values:

We aim to fulfill a growing need for time spent outdoors, fostering authentic relationships with the natural world, encouraging learning and creativity for all.

Our ultimate **goal** is to provide children with authentic learning opportunities to engage with nature in a meaningful, lasting and holistic manner- to strive to instill a positive regard for nature and teach responsible stewardship. Our **intention** is to foster a sense of community and a shared learning experience while building resilient, confident and independent learners. Our **hope** is for our students to become inquiry-driven independent thinkers who communicate effectively and are comfortable finding their own way. We aspire to prepare our students to thrive in a processed-based, collaborative world.

Curriculum:

Teamwork amongst the children is promoted within our school environment. Additionally, the children are encouraged to practice their own negotiation and conflict resolution, with a teacher standing by honoring the group's process, and stepping in only as needed. The learning is play-based and, as far as possible, child-initiated and child-led.

Forest School is an inspirational process - as we believe children achieve and develop confidence through hands-on learning. It is fundamentally based upon early childhood principles of freedom in play, creativity, socialisation skills and emotional stability. The Forest School approach benefits children in a number of ways, it supports physical development and stamina, builds self-esteem, develops problem solving skills and risk awareness, helps to build positive relationships, prepares our future citizens, promotes good mental health and wellbeing and supports children with their communication and collaboration. Our school is filled with these rich opportunities for growth, individualized recognition, trust, and support, as well as organic learning along an array of developmental domains, including the arts, science, literacy and math.

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Our Team:

Ashley Langton



Ashley is a born teacher to whom children are naturally drawn. Her formal teaching experience started in college at San Francisco State University, paired 1-on-1 with children in various preschools through Americorps and the Jumpstart program. She switched her major to early childhood development, starting a journey that has lasted 15 years so far and touched many lives.

The teaching philosophy of Reggio Emilia was a perfect match for Ashley's talent to link concepts and activities together dynamically in response to the children's changing interests, to enhance and deepen each child's connection to the world and the people around them.

Ashley has always been an outdoor enthusiast, and the opportunity to teach in a purely outdoor classroom has been a long-term dream come true. Children from all backgrounds tend to flourish in an outdoor setting, where their deeply rooted impulse to run, jump, climb, and explore can always be engaged.

When she's not leading children through the woods, Ashley lives in San Francisco right up against John McLaren Park, with her husband Gabe and three children: Holden, Zia, and Emery. She is a lover of animals and critters, and enjoys crafting, baking, museum-going, riding bikes with her family, and camping.



Magic Forest School

Mia Lugassy

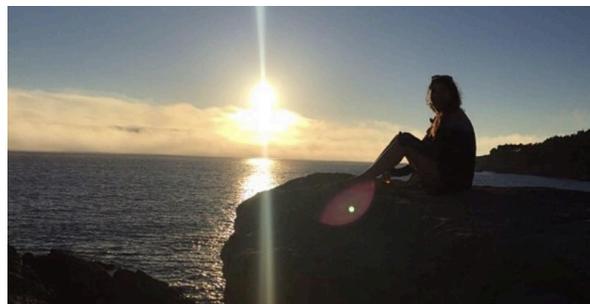


Born in Los Angeles, Mia proudly comes from a mixed family of Cuban and Moroccan immigrants, and was raised in a boisterous bilingual home. Since before she could even talk, Mia was a natural caregiver. She had an affinity for all babies and children, and seemed to have an almost magnetic effect on them.

As she continued to follow this calling, Mia received her B.A. in Child Development, with an emphasis in Early Childhood, from San Francisco State University, and has been steadily teaching (and learning from) children ages 0-5 for the last 10+ years. Once she began her studies, Mia became passionate about the Reggio Emilia Approach, which only further validated her belief that our youngest citizens are curious, competent and social learners. This was the pivotal moment which propelled Mia on her own personal 'spiritual journey' of finding and healing herself, through authentically supporting children along on their own healing journeys.

Mia aspires to create a more human school- where the "image of the child" is one of empowerment, resilience and curiosity; future generations full of radical thinkers and reshapers of the world; and nature-based pedagogy just happens to activate those potentialities in every child beautifully. Mia trusts in the joy of process and is endlessly inspired by the patterns, cycles and overall interconnectedness of nature.

Some other things that fill Mia's heart with immense joy are: helping and watching things grow, thrifting through peoples' old things, tight hugs, fairy folklore, holding space for people who need it, creek hangs, writing/reflecting, tea parties, photography, mushroom hunting, cuddles from her cat and dog, listening to a good song on repeat, cooking food from her heritage, helping others see the unique magic that they offer to the world, and at the moment reading up on herbalism and energy medicine.



Magic Forest School

The educators at Magic Forest School take their teaching practice very seriously and value the process of learning and personal growth. As the world turns, and we as a people change and evolve, us pedagogues have the unending task of continuing to listen, study, question and reflect upon human development and how young children learn; staying open and compassionate is the key. Professional Development is just one way we connect with our larger community and take time to reflect and build upon our knowledge and work as educators.

Outdoor Professional Development & Other Applicable Certifications:

- Conducted *Leave No Trace Training* through REI- Training children ages 5-18 in protecting and observing the natural world (2006-2008)
- *Outdoor Classroom Project*- Training 1 (2011)
- *The Children Learning with Nature Institute* in Santa Cruz- (2015)
- *Jewish Outside*- Five-month cohort program (2017)
- *The Children and Nature Network*- International Summer Conference (2019)
- Founded an *Outdoor Committee* at our previous school- focusing on working with staff to rethink our outdoor spaces and create intentional nature engagement with children (2019-2020)
- *Envisioning Justice: Anti-Bias Teaching in Reggio-Inspired Classrooms*- (2020-2021)
- *Land as Teacher: A Pedagogy of Relationships*- (2020-2021)
- CPR/First Aid Certified- (2021)
- Wild Med Certified- (2023)

Magic Forest School

Program:

Hours

- 9:00am-1:00pm

Days

Full-Time:

- Monday - Friday

Part-Time:

- 3-4 days/week

Location

We meet at various nature areas around the East Bay

** Locations and dates TBD

Daily Schedule

- **9:00** Morning Drop-Off at Parking area
Child-Directed exploration and play
- **9:45** Morning Gathering: storytelling, song sharing, group discussions using our senses
- **10:15** Morning Snack
- **11:15** Project work in small groups/ child led hikes
- **12:15** Lunch
- **1:00** Pick-Up

School Calendar

- First Day - **June 30th**
- 4th of July - **July 4th***
- Last Day - **Aug 8th**

*closure dates

Drop-Off and Pick-Up Policies

We ask parents to walk their child to wherever the teacher has set up the wagon and book blanket, where the larger group will be engaged in morning activities. Please give us a call or text if you are arriving after 10am, so we can plan accordingly.

Pick-up time will work similarly, we will meet parents near the drop-off space. If you pick up 30 minutes after the designated pick up time, you will be charged a late fee.

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Toileting in the Forest

Teachers assist children who need their diaper changed on a changing pad. If a child is potty-trained or potty-training, teachers suggest either a “nature pee”, or alternatively we set up a portable fold-up potty for the children to use with independence. Afterwards children wash their hands with either water and soap or hand sanitizer.

What to Bring

We can't stress the importance of proper clothing enough! Children should be in comfortable clothing. We prefer that your child wear sturdy closed-toed shoes, as we will be doing a lot of walking throughout the day.

Other items include:

- Child sized backpack- one with a chest clip and waist clip (these clips help to distribute the weight evenly on the body- which make it easier to carry and keep the pack in place)
- Lunch & snacks- nothing with glass or too heavy, easy for the child to open up independently
- Refillable water bottle- easy for child to open spout on their own
- Sun Hat
- Sunscreen
- Change(s) of clothes- pack various layers
- Lovie or comfort item if needed
- Diapers if needed
- During rainy days please provide your child with appropriate rain gear- preferably a rain suit or something that is waterproof, with zippers that are sealed, and with a hood. As well as waterproof hiking boots.

**REI is a good gear resource, but we will provide additional resources

Reminders:

- Please label everything!
- Please apply sunscreen in the morning. We will reapply in the afternoon.
- Please pack extra clothes such as socks, underwear, shirts, pants, etc.

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Tuition and Fees:

Tuition

Tuition is due on the first day of camp, by check or Zelle only. Please write your check out to Magic Forest School.

WEEKLY TUITION	5 days/week:	4 days/week:	3 days/week:
9am-1pm	\$450	\$360	\$270

***We do work under a sliding scale tuition model, so if this is too costly for your family, please reach out to learn@magicforestschool.com so we can make a plan together.*

Deposit

A deposit of **\$200** is due once all Enrollment Documents are signed. This deposit will confirm your space in our program and will be deducted from your last month's tuition, as it is part of your total tuition, not an additional fee.

Cancellation Policy

We understand that life brings lots of changes and that sometimes a plan you might have for your child or family needs shifting. We ask that if you know in advance of a change in your child's enrollment, to please give us a 30 days written notice prior to the first day of camp (June 30th). This will allow us to try and find another family to fill your spot. If your family is unable to give a 30 days written notice, we will need to hold onto your \$200 deposit, to assist in our financial situation until a replacement is found.

Late Payment Policy

The operation of Magic Forest School is dependent upon tuition received from families; thus, timely payments are essential. Establishment of a payment plan may be possible in special circumstances, if proactive communication is received.

In cases of late or non-payment of fees, the following procedure will be followed: A \$35 initial late fee will be added to tuition, plus a \$5 late fee for each additional day.

A fee of **\$35** will be charged for checks that are returned due to insufficient funds.

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Health and Safety Policies:

Food Policy

It is extremely important that you notify us of any dietary restrictions or food allergies your child might have.

Precautions due to Covid-19

- We ask that you provide your child with a mask, but we will only require that the children wear them if we come in contact with other groups. (If your family feels strongly about your child wearing a mask while at school, we will of course help encourage them to wear one.)
- We have hand sanitizer available and create our own hand washing stations to disinfect regularly throughout the day.
- All food items will be provided by families.
- All the materials that the children use will be sanitized regularly.
- ***Please keep your child home if there are any cold/flu-like symptoms in the household whatsoever.***
- If anyone in your household has tested positive, please contact us as soon as possible, so we can share information with other families, following the HIPAA regulations of privacy.
- If any person in your household has tested positive or been exposed to someone that has tested positive for covid, please keep your child home until they receive a negative test.
- If anyone in the program shows signs of Covid during the day, we will contact the parents of the child to pick them up.
- If someone tests positive within our group, we will communicate with all the families, so you are able make an informed decision about sending your child to school. We will continue to assess our situation as needed and keep the communication line open.
- We ask that if anyone in your family has to travel, that you take all the precautions to keep our class safe upon your return.

We will be doing everything in our hands to keep your children and families safe and healthy. We will be following public health guidelines and will adjust as things change. The beauty of being in the great outdoors, is the abundance of the fresh air that will keep our bodies and our minds healthy. It is important to Magic Forest School for everyone to feel comfortable and look out for each other's safety. We want the line of communication to stay open and to make sure we all stay informed in our community.

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Child Sick Policy

The frequency and severity of illness in our group can be greatly reduced by your cooperation in keeping your child at home when they are not well.

Children exhibiting any early signs of illness should not attend school. They may return to school after they are 48 hours symptom-free.

To protect the health of the other children, teachers are not permitted to allow any child showing definite signs of illness into school unless cleared by the child's pediatrician, with written confirmation. The below symptoms are ones that guide our school's decision to send children home. (If you are uncertain about these signs of illness or when to have your child return to school, please contact us.)

- Flushed or unusually pale face
- Watery or inflamed eyes
- Persistent coughing or sneezing
- Excessively runny nose
- Soreness or dryness in the throat
- Fever (above 99 degrees)
- Vomiting (as a result of illness)
- Diarrhea
- Unusual body rash
- Beginning of ear infections
- Conjunctivitis ("Pink Eye")

If your child becomes ill during our day, we will notify you at once and expect you or your designated emergency contact to pick up your child as quickly as possible. As a general rule, we will call families if a child is "off" or unable to participate in regular activities.

If you suspect your child has been exposed to or diagnosed with any contagious disease (e.g. chicken pox, measles or hand, foot & mouth disease), please inform the staff at once so that we may watch for symptoms.

We will not administer any medications during school hours outside of an epipen.

Teacher Sick Policy

Just like the children, teachers get sick as well. If a teacher gets sick, we may have to close the program for the day(s). It is imperative that your teacher comes to the program healthy, so everyone stays healthy. The last few years we tested out a Parent Volunteer Model for when one of the teachers was out sick. We would like to continue to offer this as an option, depending on the availability and willingness from our parent community, there are times that we will still need to close, if we don't have the coverage. We also have a limited sub list that we may be able to utilize for sick days, etc. We will set up a volunteer sign-up once the school year begins, and if you are available/interested in being on call to help out on those days when they may arise, we will reach out to you with as much advance notice as possible.

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Safety

We will do everything we can to keep your children safe during their time in our care. We will begin our morning as teachers, assessing the space for safety before the children arrive. We will continue this assessment with the children throughout the day. At the beginning of the year, we will take our time slowly exploring our new environment- to become familiar with our space, and what it has to offer. It is important for children to understand what is safe for us to interact with and what is not.

Tick Safety: Tips & Tricks

During warm weather seasons, we want to make sure everyone in our community is well informed. We do come across ticks during our time out in nature spaces, and although we have been assured by pediatricians that the ticks in our area don't carry lyme, we prefer to err on the side of caution. Teachers carry items that can remove a tick and are equipped to assist if a child is bit while at school, and we also perform tick checks regularly throughout the day. **Here are a few preventative measures that you can take to help:**

- Tuck your pants into your socks/wear high socks
- Tuck your shirt/base layer into your pants
- Wear long sleeve shirts and long pants in lighter shades
- Treat clothes and shoes with Permethrin or other essential-oil based bug repellent sprays (cedar, eucalyptus, rosemary, neem, citronella, tea tree, peppermint, arborvitae, and almond oils are all great options)
- Wear hair pulled up in a ponytail or braid
- Wear closed-toe shoes
- Check child daily after pick-up (ticks are attracted to warm areas: armpits, clothing lines, hair lines, between fingers/toes) & take off clothes worn outside and toss them in the dryer on high heat for at least 10 minutes

Risk is another experience we feel is essential to a child's development. Engaging in these experiences will teach them how to manage risks, which in turn cultivates a healthy understanding of safety skills. There are spaces and species we will not be able to explore with the children because the risk will be too high. But there will be lower risk activities that the children will want to explore- like climbing trees and lifting items that are larger than their bodies. These moments will be supported by the teachers so that the children have the opportunity to test out their abilities. If a child becomes fearful during these types of risks, teachers will help them to feel more comfortable and assist them to feel safe again. As teachers, we will not physically assist the children during these times of risk, unless we are asked to by the child. It is important for the children to listen to their bodies and understand what they are capable of. If we always help them climb a tree, how will they be able to climb it on their own? It is all about facilitating 'safe' risk taking, and trust is the foundation to this facilitation.

****Please let us know if there is anything that you don't feel comfortable with your child exploring, or if your child is unable to partake in certain physical activities.**

Injury Policy

If a child receives a minor injury during our day in the forest, we will treat it promptly and communicate to the parent(s) what occurred at the end of the day. We have a fully stocked first aid kit, as well as some ice packs that we carry with us everyday. If a child receives a head injury or any other serious injury, we will treat it promptly and call the parent(s) to assess the situation together and decide if the child should go home or not. As CPR/First Aid certified teachers, we have emergency plans in place if a child were to be exposed to a bite or poisonous plant. Please reach out to us for more information.

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Weather Conditions

“There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing.”

Days in the Bay Area are always unpredictable-to say the least. During days where it is colder, please make sure your child has some extra layers to put on, like gloves and hats, in case they get cold. During days when it will be raining, we will continue to run our program, and we ask that you provide your child with the proper gear. We also may bring tarps and a tent to create some coverage from the rain and sun. If there are other elements that seem unsafe (ie: thunder/lightning, or fires), we will have to close our program for the day(s). If we are exposed to these kinds of elements during our school day, we will quickly evacuate the children from the park and have them wait in a teacher's car for their families to arrive.

Fire Policy

If there is ever a fire at the park or in an area close by, we will be shutting the program down. If the fire occurs while we are in the park, we will contact the families for an immediate pick-up.

During the fire season, we will be monitoring the air quality through websites/apps such as, AirNow, IQ AirVisual and PurpleAir. If the air quality is in the orange (or higher), we will be closing the program for the day, and will stay closed until the air is in the yellow or green zone. If it looks like there will be poor air quality for an extended amount of time, we will inform you about closure as soon as we can, via text. In this case, we will most likely close for the whole week, and if the air clears up before the end of the week we inform you of when we can safely open again. We have alternate outdoor spaces in different parts of the East Bay, if the park is closed due to a fire hazard. We will communicate ahead of time, as soon as possible, which location our program will be held at.

We also wanted to share this helpful resource from the American Academy of Pediatrics, to better understand the potential hazards of wildfire smoke exposure for children: [Wildfire and Smoke Exposure Webinar](https://aapca1.org/resource/wildfire-and-smoke-exposure-webinar/) (https://aapca1.org/resource/wildfire-and-smoke-exposure-webinar/) We understand how disruptive fire season can be for each and every one of us. We deeply appreciate your patience and flexibility while we focus on keeping everyone's health and safety at the top of our priority list.

Communication:

We want the communication line to be open and reciprocal. In the process of learning, we view the teachers, parents and children as collaborators. We see the parent as an essential resource to the child's learning, and the exchange of ideas between parents and teachers is vital in creating a more positive and productive learning environment. We will use a variety of outlets to communicate, and value the face-to-face during drop-off and pick-up times to help build our relationships with each other.

Discovery Logs

This will be a weekly email sent to the families that will highlight the children's experiences and learning, along with any other important information we need to communicate.