



Program Handbook

+647-640-6392 | lisacrone@yahoo.ca



Our Philosophy

There is no doubt in anyone's mind that a full enriching educational experience is one of the greatest gifts you can give your child to help them successfully launch into adult life. While the school system is currently designed to offer some of the education children need, you may have noticed that it doesn't teach them all of the important skills to do so.



Mission Statement

Here at Joie de Vivre forest and nature school, our goal is to mentor young children and youth through a dynamic, engaging, hands on learning approach in nature. Each child is encouraged to ask questions, be curious, explore their reasoning, and be comfortable in becoming more independent.

Core Values



Play-Based Learning

We believe young children learn best through play. Specifically, we believe play that is open-ended and process-based is developmentally appropriate for young children. Young children can direct their own play using simple tools and materials provided. The role of the educator is to observe and create pedagogical documentation that allows us to know each student on an individual basis. We then provide interesting and engaging loose parts based provocations that will allow your child to investigate their ideas and interests further.

Inquiry-Based Learning

We believe young children are all natural scientists. They are curious and bold at this stage and want to understand the world around them. Instead of giving students answers, we engage them with meaningful open ended questions that further their critical and creative thinking skills. The educators are not knowledge keepers, we instead; join in the children's joy of discovery and learning in the moment by being co-learners and co-creators of the experience.

Environmental Stewardship

At Joie de Vivre forest school, we promote environmental awareness of local fauna and flora believing the more young people form strong bonds to nature, the better they will look after her in the future. Educators try to emphasizing ecological literacy in a playful way through songs, story-time, and exploration.



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1. General Information

1.1 About



Before creating Joie de Vivre FNS, Lisa established herself as an international educator working as a teacher trainer for the government of South Korea. She has over 15 years of experience teaching pre-school to adults in a variety of settings including child care centers, public schools, universities, and government training centers. Furthermore, her nurturing and entrepreneurial personality led her to create a successful animal rescue organization in South Korea 'Justice for Jindos'. Lisa originally became interested in forest schooling after seeing a video on youtube called 'Kids Gone Wild- Denmark's Forest Kindergartens' and felt a connection to this pedagogy. As a daughter of Danish immigrants in Canada, she felt a pull to help bring this early years' pedagogy to Canada. Since returning to Canada in 2018, Lisa has worked at Gradale Academy at the Brickworks in Toronto, and North 44 Academy in Guelph and is currently completing a Forest and Nature School practitioners' course and a diploma in ECE from Seneca College. Lisa is continuing to reflect on how to create respectful connections to the land which involves bridging Indigenous knowledge into FNS. She believes in bridging the learning foundations from how does learning happen with the pedagogy of forest school which values freedom, relationships, and trust. (www.joiedevivrefns.com)

1.2 What is Forest School

"Forest and nature schools have emerged, independently and collectively, in many parts of the world, and it is important to recognize the FNS approach builds on traditions; it integrates and influences a region's existing pedagogies about childhood development, education, play and connection to nature" (Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, Section: Introduction, page 3). "In Canada, we must recognize that First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) communities here have had a connection with this land, and have practiced land-based and experience-based learning, including oral traditions and storytelling, for centuries (Carruthers Den Hoed, 2014). Joie de

Vivre forest and nature school applied the philosophies and pedagogies of Forest School Canada to promote nature connection and relationship building between children, educators, families, and communities. Furthermore, at Joie de Vivre, we use the guiding principles dictated in the document How Does Learning Happen and integrate the foundations of learning into our daily practice.

1.3 Joie de Vivre Forest and Nature School

At Joie de Vivre FNS we embrace the guiding principles set out by Forest School Canada and bridge them with early childhood foundations of learning from How Does Learning Happen. The foundations of trust, relationships, and freedom allow children to feel a sense of well-being, belonging and allow them to engage and express their unique selves. When adults build stable and trusting relationships with children, families, and the community in which we belong, children feel a sense of well-being and belonging in our program. Furthermore, we give children the opportunity to engage in child-directed learning and play which supports healthy expression and engagement with the natural world, with their friends at forest school, and with the caring educators. Finally, at Joie de Vivre, as our name suggests, we support the natural joy that children bring to the world. Children in our programs are healthy, happy, and full of joy while they are supported in their curiosity, inquiries, and development.

1.4 Programs

Our past programs have included ages 4-6 at high-park, two days a week and an immersive summer camp program held at Evergreen Brickworks in the summer of 2020. Future programming will include 4-6 year olds in a group setting with two educators and the location is yet to be determined. The educators will be certified RECE's and hold forest and nature school practitioner credentials along with wilderness first aid training. Please check our website for further information regarding programming.

(www.joiedevivrefns.com).

1.5 Registration Policy

To register for any Joie de Vivre forest and nature school sessions, we require parents to first read the parent handbook and to then schedule an in person meeting with the director to assess if our program will meet the needs of the child and the caregivers involved. This is also a chance for parents to see the program in action and to ask questions about forest and nature schooling. After the initial meeting, caregivers are required to fill out and complete a full registration form that is available online at www.joiedevivrefns.com.

1.6 Payment and Refund Policy

A minimum of half of the total payment is due before the beginning of the first class of the session. The remainder is due around the halfway mark of the session. This varies by session, so please visit www.joiedevivrenfns.com for more details. If you require any special conditions please let us know as soon as possible. Payments can be made via cash, cheque and/or Etransfer to lisacrone@yahoo.ca

Refunds will be determined on a case by case basis and are not given unless there are extreme circumstances that prevent a child from participating in forest and Nature School.

1. Refunds will not be given if a day's program is cancelled due to inclement weather.
2. A child who is absent or leaves for a portion of the day due to illness, injury, expulsion or any other reason will not be refunded any portion of that day's program fees. If the child is unable to return for the remainder of the semester, a refund may be granted for the remaining days.
3. If a refund is issued, it may be subject to a \$30 administration fee. In some cases, refunds can be used towards a future semester.
4. Two weeks' notice is required if you decided to leave the program and you will be refunded the remaining balance, minus any administrative fees.

1.7 Location

To be determined.

1.8 Contact Information

Lisa Crone- Director of Joie de Vivre FNS

Phone- 647-640-6392

Email- lisacrone@yahoo.ca

All contact information will be updated if and any employees are hired.



2.1 Privacy Policy

Joie de Vivre will collect personal information from the registration form and will not share these documents with anyone else. These documents are stored in a locked filing cabinet. Copies of children's medical history and emergency contacts will be distributed only to appropriate caregivers that are responsible for the care of your child. These documents will be safe-guarded in a private folder and will only be shared with parents and/or emergency personal and other indicated guardians in emergencies. In the registration form, parents are asked to sign a document allowing Joie de Vivre to take photos and videos of children to be shared in our website or private fb page. This is up to the parents' discretion and if this is not signed, we will not include your child on either website or social media site.

2.2 Illness Policy

Due to the covid-19 pandemic, children are required to pass a daily screening form that must be filled out by the caretaker BEFORE the child arrives at the program. If the screening form has not been completed, your child will not be allowed to attend that day. If staff do notice any of the following symptoms we will isolate the child with a caretaker and monitor them until a parent can pick up the child.

- Fever
- Cough and/or sniffing
- Fatigue/lethargy
- Upset stomach
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Change in mood
- Chills or change in body temperature

Once the child's symptoms have not been present for 24 hours, the child may return to school. All other staff and parents will be notified of the child's symptoms and severity if they wish to

have their child tested for covid-19 and/or to be on the alert for possible symptom development.

If any child presents signs of illness, as described above, staff will call a parent to pick up the child from forest school. We will treat the child's symptoms as best as possible and keep the child comfortable until pick-up.

*Finally, due to the nature of forest school and the current climate of covid, we cannot accommodate a child who has mild symptoms. Children must be feeling good and energetic to enjoy the full day of activities at forest school which is physically and active.

2.3 Food and Allergy Policy

All students must bring at least one refillable bottles of fresh water to forest school each day. In the summer months and warmer days, children are required to bring two bottles of water. Children need to come to forest school with an adequate lunch and two snacks per day. The contents need to be carried in containers appropriate for the weather. Furthermore, we ask to bring non-disposable items as we aim for a leave no trace goal. If there are disposable materials, children will be asked to bring a plastic bag to keep the materials in their day packs.

Parents must note any known food allergies on the registration forms. If there are any known food allergies, staff will be notified and these will be documented on the students emergency forms which staff will keep with them at all times. We do not permit students to bring any snacks containing nuts and if there are other known food allergies, we will not permit any student or staff member to bring that food to the program. Children who have notified us of a severe, life-threatening food allergy, are required to have two epi-pens with them at all times. Staff are trained in anaphylaxis and epi-pen administration and first-aid CPR-C.

*On occasion, we will organize a cooking over the fire activity. In these cases, parents will be notified of the days and we will recommend items to pack that can be cooked over the fire. On these days, we will be teaching skills for cooking over the fire, will conduct risk benefit assessments before and after, and ensure that food is thoroughly and adequately cooked for consumption.

2.4 Toileting and Handwashing Procedures

All children who attend Joie de Vivre must be toilet trained. At the site, we will have two portable toilets that will be used by staff and children. We teach self-advocacy skills for asking to use the bathroom as well as scheduled toilet times. We will show children how to use the toilets and how to wash their hands with soap and water adequately. We include stools in the

bathrooms to allow children to be independent and learn proper hygiene. Staff will keep hand sanitizer in backpacks in case of emergencies.

If a child has an accident, staff are ready to help your child change into their extra clothing. We do not believe in demeaning children at any time if any accidents occur and use a no shame policy to ensure your child feels supported.

While at times we are not close to portable toilets and children need to go, they need to be comfortable using an 'outdoor toilet'. Please try to prepare your child to go to the bathroom in the outdoor prior to enrollment in our programs. Staff always bring appropriate toileting and hand sanitizer, wipes, and a water/soap kit with them during adventures.

2.5 Risk Management Policy and Procedures

Before using any new site, staff will perform a risk assessment of the site to ensure it is safe as needed to play there. If there are any areas of concern, we will mitigate the risks and re-assess. If we are unable to resolve any plausible risks, we will not use the site and restore a boundary zone to indicate to children that it is unsafe to enter.

Risky play is a large part of our forest school philosophy and we strive to make learning situations as safe as needed, not as safe as possible. We meet children where they are at and as such, we never push a child to do something they themselves are not comfortable with. Instead, we offer opportunities for risky play. These may include: playing at high speeds, playing at heights, playing with tools, playing near water, rough-and-tumble play, and playing where children can "disappear" or get lost. Furthermore, if children decide to engage in a form of risky play, educators are taught to assess the risks by involving children and asking them important questions such as "what is your plan" so we can understand how they are thinking about it.

Tool Use

Educators always teach how to use a tool before it can be used. We teach tool use in small groups of one-to-one and how one needs to use the tool to stay safe. When children are supervised and know they are using the tool safely, it builds a relationship of trust between the educator and child.

If we deem a child is not yet capable to use tools due to emotional regulation issues or has shown an inability to stay safe in the past, we will not allow this privilege until the time is right.

Tools are always stored in a locked box and can only be taken out by a staff member.

Climbing Trees

Before climbing a tree, educators do a risk assessment on the tree(s) with the children. We look for dead branches and general health of the tree as well as discuss how high to climb based on comfort. We give tips to children such as staying close to the trunk and keeping 3 points of contact. Children in our care are never pushed to climb trees and we will not allow tree climbing for children that have not shown capacity yet either physically or emotionally.

Playing Near Water

In some cases, children may want to play in mud or in shallow water. Before we allow this, educators will assess the area for glass, rocks, or other elements that could cause injury. We will note the temperature of the water, the depth of the water, and only allow children to play in water that does not go above rain boots. If children are not dressed appropriately for water, we allow to play near the water only. Activities such as throwing rocks in the water or creating fishing rods and role-playing are some alternative activities we will provide.

Rough and Tumble Play

At forest school, we allow children to engage in consenting rough and tumble play. Before we allow for any rough and tumble play between friends, we establish rules such as when someone says “stop”, we all stop. Some children are not ready to engage in rough and tumble play due to a lack of regulation skills. In these cases, we do not allow children to engage in rough and tumble play if they cannot follow clearly defined rules and consent. Overall, we believe rough and tumble play is an essential form of play that allows children to connect with each other using non-verbal communication and teaches them how to be respectful in physical play.

2.6 Emergency Procedures and First Aid

Joie de Vivre has written emergency procedure plans written for staff and these plans are reviewed regularly. All staff have up to date first aid and CPR C and a vulnerable sector check at a minimum. Some of our staff have wilderness first aid training.

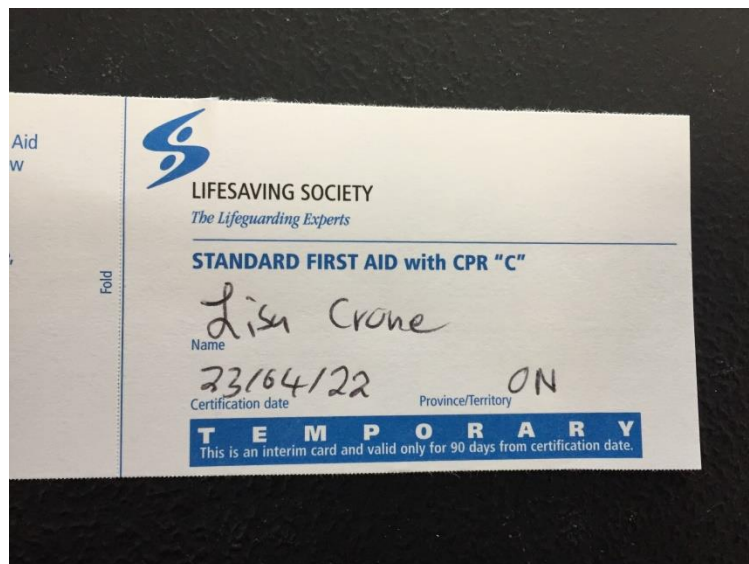
Each group has an emergency bag and emergency contact list on them at all times. The contact list is held in a waterproof bag and will contact parents if necessary. Each emergency bag contains the following materials:

- various sizes of bandages
- splints
- anti-septic wipes
- anti-allergy medicine

- hypothermal blanket
- whistles
- a full first aid kit with scissors and appropriate materials

All staff carry a phone with them in case of an emergency and will notify all staff members when and if an emergency happens to obtain bystanders and call EMS if necessary.

2.7 Copy of First Aid and CPR C



2.8 Participant Staff Ratios

In our programs with 4-6 year olds, staff ratio will be maintained at 1:5. In our older age groups, staff ratio is 1:8. We may also include extra staff of volunteers or trainees who wish to obtain and be mentored in forest and nature school training.

2.9 Staff Responsibilities

-Staff are responsible for maintaining a physically and emotionally safe and enjoyable environment for the children. The first responsibility is to maintain safety by running daily risk assessments, site assessments, and risk benefit assessments to ensure the program and the children are benefiting from the outdoor play.

-Staff will model healthy social and emotional relational skills for the children through role-playing. We believe in co-regulation and show children how to remain calm and resilient when conflict arises.

-Staff will try to create stable and supportive relationships with each child and support their inquiries and curiosities in the outdoors.

-Staff will communicate regularly with parents about the day, their child's growing interests, and developmental stages at the end of the day. Staff are also encouraged to share a weekly story on story-park to share with parents. Staff will also share any changes or adaptations to programming with parents.

The Role of the Educator

At Joie de Vivre, the role of the educator is different from the traditional teacher. We are not the experts or keepers of knowledge. Instead, we share in their joy, learning, and discoveries. We avoid high-jacking children's play and wait until we are invited. Our educators are trained ECE's, and as such, observe, listen carefully, and document what is happening. We balancing commenting and questioning as both have value. When commenting, we use open ended wording such as "look at how the feathers float through the air when you throw them up"! When questioning, we avoid 'testing children'. Instead, we use questions to provoke thinking, calling attention to the moments and allow children to share their thinking, ideas, and observations. We use open-ended questioning, rather than questions requiring a right or wrong, a yes/no answer. Finally, we try to just be natural in our communication and have simple conversations with children instead of talking down to them. In this way, we support the foundations of learning: well-being, belonging, engagement, and expression along with the foundations of fns philosophy of trust, relationships, and freedom.

2.10 Volunteer/Accompanying Adult

Volunteers and accompanying adults may be with us to support individual children who require more accommodations, to learn about the FNS philosophy, and to support the overall programming by increasing the adult to child ratio. Volunteers and accompanying adults must read the handbook and support the FNS and HDLH philosophies while interacting with children. We sometimes take on staff who are interning to gain their forest and nature school practicums. In general, we ask all volunteer and accompanying adults to stay on for a full program term to reduce any disruptions for the children and relationship building. All volunteers and accompanying adults must have a vulnerable sector check and first aid CPR C at a minimum.

2.11 Preparing for FNS/ Clothing and Equipment

There is a famous Scandinavian saying "there's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing". As such, it is necessary to dress appropriately for the weather.

Cold Weather

Cool Rainy Day Clothing (Fall/Winter/Spring):

Base Layer: Synthetic or wool long john shirt and pants; wool socks

Mid Layer: Fleece or wool sweater and pants

Outer Layer: Durable, WATERPROOF raincoat and rain-pants; warm toque; waterproof, insulated mittens; waterproof boots (Bogs, Kamik or similar)

Extra Layers: 1-2 pairs of wool socks, 1-2 pairs of waterproof insulated mittens; warm toque; mid layer as indicated above; underwear.

Optional: Extra boots

Cool Dry Day Clothing (Fall/Spring):

Base Layer: Synthetic or wool long john shirt and pants; wool socks

Mid Layer: Lightweight fleece or wool pants and sweater

Outer Layer: Warm jacket; durable rain-pants, waterproof boots, waterproof mittens; warm toque

Extra Layers: 1-2 pairs of wool socks, 1 pair of waterproof insulated mittens; mid layer as indicated above; underwear.

Warm Rainy Day Clothing (Fall/Spring):

Base Layer: Lightweight, synthetic material t-shirt and long sleeve; lightweight, synthetic material pants (quick-dry material is ideal); wool socks

Outer Layer: Durable, WATERPROOF raincoat and rain-pants; waterproof boots

Extra Layers: Fleece Sweater; wool socks, toque

Optional: Extra boots

Warm Dry Day Clothing (Fall/Spring):

Base Layer: Lightweight, long pants that can easily be rolled up; t-shirt; lightweight synthetic socks

Outer Layer: Fleece sweater or jacket; closed toe running shoes or hiking boots; sun hat

Extra Layers: Extra socks; base layer

Optional: Bug jacket (Spring)

Cold Winter Day Clothing:

Base layer: Long john shirt and pants made of wool, silk, fleece or polyester; wool socks

Mid layer: Wool or fleece sweater and pants; fleece or wool neckwarmer

Outer Layer: Warm, waterproof, windproof and breathable snow suit; warm toque; waterproof insulated mittens; warm waterproof boots

Extra Layers: 1-2 pairs of wool socks; warm toque; mid layer, 1-2 pairs of insulated mittens

Optional: Extra boots, hand-warmers, extra snowsuit

What to Pack:**FULL DAY ATTENDANCE:**

- Spare socks and underwear in a waterproof or ziplock bag
- A full water bottle (at least 500ml)
- A full litter-less lunch with at least 2 additional snacks
- A small hand towel
- Sunscreen, bug spray (or bug hat/jacket) if desired
- An extra mid layer (fleece or wool sweater)
- For winter add 2 extra pairs of waterproof/resistant mittens
- For spring and fall add a complete set of waterproof rain gear (pants and jacket)

HALF DAY ATTENDANCE:

- Spare socks and underwear in a waterproof or ziplock bag
- A full water bottle
- 2 snacks
- A small hand towel
- Sunscreen, bug spray (or bug hat/jacket) if desired
- An extra mid layer (fleece or wool sweater)
- For winter add an extra pair of waterproof/resistant mittens
- For spring and fall add a complete set of waterproof rain gear (pants and jacket)

To pack in an extra bag to send with your child each week (kept in the woodshed)...

- A full change of clothing suitable for the season and weather
- Spare footwear – running shoes, rain boots or extra winter boots depending upon the season
- Spare snow pants or rain pants if available (optional)

Reference (Oro Medonte Forest School Handbook, 2021, 2.11.3).

2.12 Child Protection Policy/ Children's Rights

All staff are trained in recognizing signs of and reporting child abuse. We have written policies for reporting child abuse and staff are asked to review it regularly. As registered ECE's, we have a duty to report and take this seriously. Furthermore, we teach children their rights and responsibilities <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text-childrens-version>. We have respect for children's rights, views, and allow children to express themselves freely. All staff make decisions thinking about how they affect children and their rights. We pride ourselves on doing a good job and making sure we are being responsible at all times using good judgement seeing children as junior citizens that we must respect as equals.

2.13 Inclement Weather/ Closure Policy

Learning to deal with rain, snow, cold, and heat is part of the forest school ethos. This builds resiliency, problem solving skills, trust, and empathy. First and foremost children should show up dressed appropriately for the day. If it rains, we can play in puddles and mud, and if it snows we can track animals and play in the snow; as long as the children are dressed for the weather! In colder weather, we may provide hot drinks with a fire pit and in hotter weather, we will take to the shade. The educators are experienced and knowledgeable about how to handle various weather conditions.

If school districts have announced school closures and bus cancellations, we will cancel programs. **There are no refunds for closure due to weather conditions.**

2.14 Extreme Weather Policy

Staff will monitor weather conditions throughout the day. We will stay near a shelter space and take shelter if necessary keeping awareness of the weather. In extreme cases such as tornado warnings, -25 or above 30, we will use the indoors. Once the weather has passed, we can go back outside. Staff will continually monitor children for any signs of heat exhaustion and/or cold.

If school districts have announced school closures and bus cancellations, we will cancel programs. **There are no refunds for closure due to weather conditions.**

In case by case situations, we may end the day early and will notify parents of pick up time as soon as possible.

2.15 Procedures for Tool Use

Tool Use- Educators always teach how to use a tool before it can be used. We teach tool use in small groups of one-to-one and how one needs to use the tool to stay safe. When children are supervised and know they are using the tool safely, it builds a relationship of trust between the educator and child.

If we deem a child is not yet capable to use tools due to emotional regulation issues or has shown an inability to stay safe in the past, we will not allow this privilege until the time is right.

Tools are always stored in a locked box and can only be taken out by a staff member.



3.1 Planning, Observation, and Documentation

At Joie de Vivre forest and nature school, we use a Reggio Inspired approach to documenting children's 100 languages. Children have various and unique ways of expressing themselves and we as facilitators, wish to capture what makes each child tick. We aim to document through photos and videos and or notes, how each child is expressing themselves through their preferred interests and unique qualities. We then plan and prepare provocations based on what children discover, are curious about, and have questions about. This can be based on seasonal cycles, found objects, elements of water, earth, wind, and fire, and/or animals, plants, and weather. Children are curious and tend to have many questions and we document and respond to them. All of our provocations are open ended including materials and/or books to further develop the child's inquiry on that topic. The provocations we provide are based on weather, site conditions, and the social dynamics. Educators meet at the end of the day to discuss areas of concern, interest, growth, and plan future activities.

3.2 Behavior Management Policy

Stress Detectors

At Joie de Vivre FNS we do not believe in behavior management but in co-regulation methods. Educators often see 'misbehavior' while we see 'stress behavior'. Therefore, at Joie de Vivre, we aim to be stress detectors. We watch for stressors from any domain whether it be: social, biological, emotional, cognitive, or prosocial. Behavior is usually rooted in hidden stressors that we do not always notice. Some children are hyper sensitive to sensations, noise, too much activity, or they are tired and need food. It is our role to observe, and notice what is causing a child's stress if any and to respond to the stressors in an effective way by reducing them.

When we document any stressors, we inform parents of our observations and get feedback from them. Parents are often more aware of the child's stressors and can help to come up with solutions for resolving the stressor on that child.

Conflicts

Conflicts often arise with younger children who are learning to regulate their emotions and learn socially acceptable behavior. In situations when conflicts arise, educators will do the following:

- Observe and see if children can problem solve
- If we need to, we step in
- We acknowledge children's feelings
- We use breathing or calming techniques to calm down the children
- We will divert their attention to an activity if necessary for calming down
- We will offer strategies for problem solving the situation
- We support children in using "I" statements to express how they felt

If there are conflicts that involved physical and/or more serious emotional stress such as a physical fight or bullying another child, we will have a meeting with parents to discuss strategies to solve the problems. We are determined to be an inclusive setting but must support the overall well-being of our group. If we deem a child is putting others at risk and we have used all of our resources, we may ask your child to be removed from our program until they can show a baseline ability to participate safely.



4.0 Inclusion and Accessibility Policies

There can be a lot of barriers for individuals with disabilities to actively participate in forest school. We strive to consistently ask questions and adapt every aspect of our programming to allow people with physical, emotional, and or mental disabilities to participate fully in our programs. The semi-structured play that is child-led may not work for all children and can be a barrier to entry into free play. For this reason, we continually assess situations using guided adaptations and scaffolding.

Supported Facilitation and Scaffolding

While some kids jump right in and make ideas, other kids may have physical, emotional, or cognitive limitations. Educators are trained to use scaffolding to facilitate child-led integration. This might look like offering one or two options instead of open play or allowing a child to draw their ideas instead of building something. These methods reduce feelings of overwhelm and allow the child to engage without feeling stressed out or anxious. It might take numerous visits with scaffolding to allow a child to then direct the play. Overall, we try to meet children where they are at without being too overbearing and or over protective. Most importantly, educators know that scaffolding is not doing the forest school philosophy less, it is allowing for a safe entry into child led play.

Risky Play

We believe risks are only right for you, your body, and your mind. All play can be risky for some children. Some kids are nowhere near going across a log. A risk for them could just be coming out to engage in play. Putting hands in snow or mud for the first time could also be a risk. For others, it could be touching bark, hanging off a branch. Risk looks different for every child. Climbing a tree might not be a viable option, but sitting in a tree could be attempted. Like above, a safe entry into risk using scaffolding is used. We modify risks for every child so that they can engage at their own level.

Accommodations at Forest School

In cases where wheel-chair accessibility is required, we ensure all of our trails are wide enough to accommodate an all-terrain wheel-chair. Alternatively, we have garden wagons and bean bags available to allow participants to sit close to the ground and move into more hard to reach areas. A classic sled can be arranged for winter months. For younger children, simply adding a rope to a laundry basket can suffice. We will find ways to keep them in there and communicate with parents while making an effort to find appropriate adaptations.

*in addition, we consult with adults with disabilities for consultation



Communication Strategies

5.1 General Communication

Interpersonal communication skills between staff, children, and parents are valued and supported at Joie de Vivre FNS. We believe in an open, honest, and respectful communication as a way of establishing and maintaining credibility and relationships. We value input from everyone including the children. When we establish rules, we ask for everyone's input and make sure everyone is heard and that their opinions are validated. We involve parents communication input for their knowledge and expertise and build cooperation within the framework of parents, educators, and community supporting the developing child. We have a zero tolerance policy for any language that demeans age, ability, status and sexist and racist language.

5.2 Emergency Communication

In emergencies, every staff member is notified of the emergency. We utilize bi-standards to call EMS and/or aid in emergency first aid support if necessary. Parents are always notified of any emergencies that take place at forest school and we continually communicate with parents during any such emergencies. When and if an emergency happens, staff remain calm and communicate effectively and in a direct manner with children and supports to stay safe and efficient.

5.3 Questions and Concerns

At the end of each day, educators will meet parents at the drop-off point to address any questions and concerns parents have. If we cannot adequately answer questions or concerns, we will schedule a meeting with the director to direct the questions further. Questions and concerns are always taken with seriousness and we will address the questions and concerns fully until the parent feels comfortable with the response and understanding.

When children offer questions and concerns, we also take them seriously. If children do not understand a direction or are concerned about a specific task we are doing, we listen to them and respond appropriately.

5.4 Grievance Policy

At Joie de Vivre forest school, we are open to concerns, questions, and feedback from parents, caregivers, and children. With a growth mindset, we believe that all stakeholders have a part to play in maintaining ongoing expansion of our programs. We want to build open and supportive relationships with all members and as such, are happy to hear any issue you want to bring up. If the matter is urgent, this will be prioritized. Otherwise, any concerns should be communicated via email or by phone to the director. Your concern will be addressed within 24-72 hours with consultation with staff members.



Environmental Sustainability

6.1 Land and Environmental Ethics

At Joie de Vivre, we conduct ecological impact assessments monthly in order to maintain the space that we learn upon. We involve children in this assessment asking them to notice any changes in the environment from human activity, including our own. Using markers keeps the children within a specific zone to reduce foot traffic erosion and we stay on marked paths for any adventure walks. When handling any plants or animal life, we teach the children respect. We do not take any live plant life and try to use objects that we find on the ground only. If children wish to look at amphibian life, we use nets to capture and look at with a catch and release protocol. Furthermore, we emphasize an observational point of view and a non-destructive stance to move gently on the earth watching all life forms and their cycles throughout the year. Finally, we teach the children to respect and care for the environment through daily story-telling, songs, and at times visits from Indigenous elders in the community.

6.2 Leave No Trace

At Joie de Vivre, we follow a leave no trace policy by asking all children to bring non-disposable food containers and refillable water bottles each day. Children must bring a bag with them in their backpacks in case they do have disposable items and can discard them at home. We follow and teach seven specific principles of leave no trace.

1. Plan ahead and prepare- we teach children what to pack and bring in order to reduce any impacts such as a compass, reusable containers, and refillable water bottles for the day.
2. Stay on Durable Surfaces- we stay on already marked paths and footed traffic areas to allow natural spaces to stay natural.

3. Dispose of Waste Properly- children bring a plastic bag with them and use the bag if necessary to dispose of waste which will then be disposed of at home. We have a zero policy for any littering in the area.

4. Minimize Campfire Impact-

4. Leave What you Find- if children want to use materials for an art project, we make sure they are on the ground. We do not collect live plants or move animals from one place to another.

5. Respect Wildlife- we teach an observational mindset with sit spots, owl eyes, and deer ears training. Children know to observe wildlife quietly as to not disturb them and we emphasize this on a daily basis.

6. Be considerate of other visitors- we prepare the site and keep it clean for other programs and visitors. We teach children to be aware of the needs of others and the necessity to respect the space to everyone visiting can continue to enjoy the pristine wildlife and natural areas.

References

Oro Medonte Forest School. (2021) Seasonal Layering Systems for Forest School: 2.11.3.
<https://oromedonteforestschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/OMFS-Parent-Handbook-Aug-2021-Update-CURRENT.pdf>