



FIRST ROOTS - WILD ROOTS
NATURE BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD



TREEHOUSE AT WILD ROOTS
SCHOOL AGE PROGRAMS

Fall 2025

Dear Educator!

At all three First Roots - Wild Roots programs, the joy of learning in community is at the heart of what we do! Through storytelling, songs, games, and creative expression, educators engage with young children and the natural world, exploring concepts of self, mathematics, science, physical development, problem solving, literacy, and social emotional fluency. By engaging as curious learners alongside children, educators foster a mindset of lifelong learning and set the stage for collaborative growth and development. First Roots educators share a common passion for professional development, community building and a love for nature and our planet - and of course for having fun!

I invite you to review this packet of information, which shares how we at First Roots - Wild Roots are supporting our educators and making efforts to change the landscape of Early Childhood Education as a profession here in Vermont!

If you would like to schedule an interview or have any questions, please contact us!

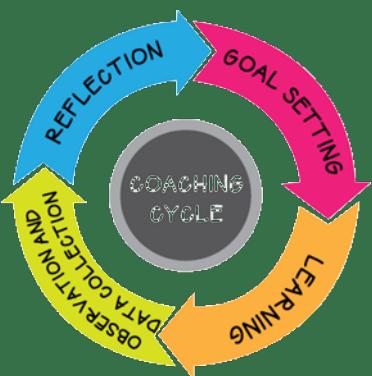
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ACHIEVING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Info Sheet A1: *Coaching and Mentoring at First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse (FRWR)*

HOW OUR COACHING MODEL WORKS

Our coaching success is based on applying multiple approaches throughout the year. We conduct in-class observations and informal coaching meetings to follow up on the goals that were set in previous months. These are short reviews about an individual's strengths, progress, and feedback about additional resources they may need to reach their goals. We supplement these with more formal meetings around an annual review. We also encourage “swap” days where teachers can work with and learn from their peers.



OUR COACHING AND MENTORING MODEL

First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse (FRWR) has a professional development model based on a collaborative framework. It is a structured and sustained process using two professional learning groups (a mentor and a coach) to enable teachers to embed new knowledge and skills in day to day practice.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN COACH AND A MENTOR?

We differentiate between a “teacher as teacher” and “teacher as professional”. Our coaching model that focuses on the pedagogical skills as a **teacher** – E.g. Building a nature based curriculum that embeds developmental learning goals for children. This **coach** is our program wide Curriculum Coordinator. In addition, we have defined a set of behavioral skills (see Info Sheet A2) for our staff to continue to grow as **professionals**. Each staff is assigned to a mentor (which could be an experienced senior teacher or Director) to support staff in improving these important behavioral skills.

WHAT IS OUR COACH'S ROLE IN THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL?

The coach facilitates the exploration of goals, motivations and skills. They observe, listen and ask questions. They support goal setting and assessment. The coach uses questions to identify solutions and encourages commitment to action, while maintaining a positive, supportive and non-judgmental point of view.

“Leadership has made my transition to this center a breeze! I really appreciate how everyone is really good about communicating and helping me out whenever need be”

Preschool Teacher, First Roots-Wild Roots

This results in a real, lasting positive change based upon the needs, goals and experience of each staff person.



"Keep Kids Wild" – First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO OUR STAFF IN THIS MODEL?

Staff report that they feel valued and listened to. It provides them with recognition and appreciation of their skills. Each staff member is clear on how they could develop their teaching and professional skillset. It provides a freedom for our employees to be more creative and optimistic and creates a more positive and confident attitude to change. It allows teachers to try something new and have a coach's and mentor's support and experience to do this. The coach and mentor are tasked with developing the teacher side and with making them more successful – measured as a successful transition through the FRWR career pathway. That way, the teacher's success becomes their mentor and coach's success. Everybody is aligned.

I'VE HEARD THAT YOU SWAP TEACHERS. WHAT IS THIS?

We encourage our teachers to have a chance to work with other co-teachers for a short period of time (1 day to 1 week) to gain new insights into another classroom style and techniques. As FRWR has grown geographically, there is also an opportunity to work at a different location. These opportunities can help with a particular goal that has been identified as a developmental need or just to experience another teacher's classroom.

ABOUT US

First Roots-Wild Roots is an Early Education Center with programs in Hinesburg and Underhill, Vermont. We are a 5 STAR nature based early-care and education program who believe in play-based, outdoor experiences that are appropriate to each child's developmental level. We serve ages 6 weeks to 8 years.

HOW WE ARE DIFFERENT

We value each family as a child's first teacher and are committed to building a community where families feel connected to one another, and to the greater Hinesburg and Underhill communities. As an Eco-healthy childcare certified program, we are also committed to making sustainable environmental choices and business practices both inside and outside of the classroom. We achieved SEED certification in 2024. Our head teachers all have degrees in early childhood and participate in professional development coursework that benefits our classrooms in unique ways. We are a dedicated community that values nature-based outdoor learning children, families and staff and we hope that you share in our vision! We are proud to be LGBTQ+ affirming community that values inclusion not exclusion!

Contact Us:



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ACHIEVING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Info Sheet A2: *Career Development at First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse (FRWR)*

WHAT ARE BEHAVIORAL COMPETENCIES?

These are a key part of our career progression. We have described a set of 9 competencies that we believe will make all of our employees successful as a childcare professionals. The competencies support our Mission. These fall under three broad categories : *Achieving Professional Development* – (Knowledge, Work Skills and Personal Development); *Building a Community* – (Communication, Empathy and Teamwork); *Creating a Sustainable Business* – (Initiative & Efficiency, Ethics and Quality). Each of the nine competencies is defined at each career level (1 thru 5) to provide a transparent description of performance expectations at each level.

OUR CAREER DEVELOPMENT MODEL

First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse (FRWR) has a unique career model which encourages growth and individual professional development. It is a structured and transparent process that provides for an annual assessment and through it, opportunities for individual career advancement and compensation growth.

HOW WILL I BE SUCCESSFUL AT FIRST ROOTS-WILD ROOTS?

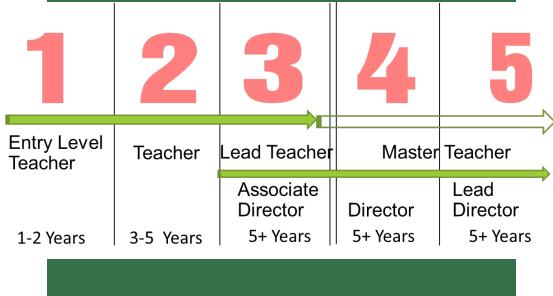
Your annual review allows for an opportunity for you to describe your performance at multiple points in the year against your specific job requirements – the *what* you do – and how you align with a set of behavioral competencies – the *how* you do it. We then use your self-assessment and seek positive affirmations from peers and directors to see how you are performing against the expectations for your role and tenure.

HOW WILL I BE GIVEN FEEDBACK THROUGHOUT THE YEAR?

Our coaching and mentoring model (See Info Sheet A1) provides a very transparent review process. Inquiry and feedback are key features to being successful at FRWR. It is our belief that an annual review should not be a surprise. We work hard to do this. Throughout the year you will have check-ins and feedback aligned with your behavioral competencies.

“The leadership team has worked hard to have meetings with me at an appropriate time when I have reached out to chat. These meetings have felt good and I have walked away feeling heard, understood and with new ideas.”

Toddler Teacher, First Roots-Wild Roots & The Treehouse



Your annual assessment should be mutual agreement of what is going well and the improvement steps required to get to the next level.



"Keep Kids Wild" – First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse

HOW DOES MY COMPENSATION CHANGE AS I MOVE THROUGH THE CAREER MODEL?

As outlined in our compensation and benefits sheet, (Info Sheet C3), there are multiple ways to move through our program and receive increases in compensation. When you join us, you typically start at a Level 1 or Level 2 (dependent on qualifications, college credits and on the job work experience). At your review, you will then be assessed against the defined behavioral competencies. If you are operating consistently at a higher level, you will be considered to move to that level. The expectation is for the vast majority of our staff to move through the sublevels each year. It is your mentor and coach's mission to make sure that you have the best opportunity to do so. Typically therefore, this increase results in a 3-5% annual increase in addition to the Cost of Living increases that everybody would receive.

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ACHIEVING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Info Sheet A3: *Developing First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse (FRWR) Staff Professionally*

WHAT IS OUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL?

We recognize that our staff are the most important resource for sustaining our early education program and providing excellent teaching. To enhance this we are committed to supporting staff development in terms of their knowledge, skill and personal effectiveness. We have developed a model that includes mentoring, external professional development, inservice and online training. We encourage staff to share responsibility for their development and an integral part of this is candid and systematic feedback on performance.



OUR STAFF'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PD)

First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse (FRWR) professional development draws upon our considerable in-house training capabilities as Northern Lights Registered Instructors. Our annual hourly PD requirements are met during work hours (no weekends or after work PD!) and we support participation in conferences, particularly the *In-Bloom* Nature Based Educator conference hosted by Antioch University each Spring.

HOW WILL I BE GUIDED IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

We have a dedicated Coordinator of PD & Curriculum to guide and track your professional learning and development. We take an individualized approach to set goals based upon your annual review and quarterly check-ins. Your PD pathway is set by your IPDP and the ongoing mentoring and coaching feedback.

WHAT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DO YOU SUPPORT AND SPONSOR?

We are fully supportive of the Vermont Apprenticeship T.E.A.C.H programs. We have also hosted several students enrolled in the Essex CTE (Career and Technical Education) Early Childhood program.

*“Every year, the *In-Bloom* conference in NH is a place where new possibilities of what nature based learning can be continues to inspire my practice. And the fire and s’mores aren’t bad either!”*

In-Bloom participant, First Roots-Wild Roots

These programs offer hands-on experience in a high-quality learning environment in partnership with academic ECE coursework. Our program satisfies their paid work study requirements. We have supported staff who have undertaken Peer Review to gain a VT teaching license, and we provide the required release time and tuition reimbursement of up to \$500 per year. In the past few years our staff have attended NAAEE (North American



"Keep Kids Wild" – First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse

Association for Environmental Education) VtAEYC, In-Bloom conferences at Antioch as well as FRWR hosted trainings by Shelburne Farms, Brooklyn Botanical Gardens and other locally and nationally renowned outdoor education trainers.

WHAT DOES A TYPICAL IN-SERVICE DAY LOOK LIKE?

To be fair, there is never a typical in-service day. But at each in-service, staff will have an opportunity for each team (Preschool, Infant-Toddler & School-Age) to get together to reflect on challenges and provide collaboration on curriculum, in addition to staff meetings and specific in-house trainings. We have dedicated trainings each year based upon our commitment to a more just world that centers include Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) trainings and its application to our daily work.

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BUILDING A COMMUNITY

Info Sheet B1: *First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse (FRWR) Teacher Led Committees*

HOW DOES FRWR GATHER TEACHER'S POINTS OF VIEW?

The teacher led committees at FRWR are focused on the three building blocks of our mission. Usually these are formed and created to address important questions impacting Professional Development, our Community and Sustainability. Staff members are encouraged to get involved in committees that speaks to them as teachers as well as to their passions as people. These Committees allow staff to have a voice in the program's trajectory, collaborate with other staff and utilize their distinct skills.



TEACHER LED WORKING GROUPS

First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse (FRWR) has a committee model based on the program's three strands of its mission.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN THEIR LEARNING COMMUNITY?

These committees are a liaison between staff interests and unique training opportunities. Staff have a key input into the annual PD curriculum for the staff and making recommendations or deciding on staff meeting agenda items, site visit recommendations and presenter invitations. In recent years, committees have provided valuable feedback on proposed changes to our career processes like revising the behavioral competencies, mentoring, coaching and most recently the implications and understandings of a new third-teacher model and impact on in-classroom teaching.

HOW DO STAFF WORK WITH THE WIDER COMMUNITY? AND ORGANIZE FUN WORK EVENTS?

Many of our teachers are actively engaged in committees tasked with planning and implementing events in partnership with our families and our Hinesburg and Underhill/Jericho neighborhoods. These events may take place on our campus or elsewhere in the community. For example, the teacher run committees have run the Holiday Giving Wreath and the Jericho Fall Harvest Festival events.

“I appreciate that I get to create meaningful events to connect staff, families and the wider community”

AC, Infant Teacher, First Roots-Wild Roots

There are other collaborative team events like the sponsored Fire Truck Pull (in collaboration with Outright Vermont), our team of Elves at the VCTF Polar Express event in Burlington and organizing seasonal potluck luncheons with families.



"Keep Kids Wild" – First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN SUSTAINING A HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENT?

Staff and Families are involved in the recertification, retention and renewal of our Eco-Healthy certification (see Info Sheet C1). In addition, they are focused on expanding the outdoor learning environment and building collaboration with families that support and use our outdoor spaces. In the past, families helped with a Green-up day, built willow houses, planted sunflower mazes and assemble rain barrels for our gardens.

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BUILDING A COMMUNITY

Info Sheet B2: *First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse (FRWR): Our Community Engagement*

WHY FOCUS ON ENGAGING THE WIDER COMMUNITY?

At FRWR we believe it is vital to teach children the importance of community engagement. We strive to source materials locally support small businesses teach the power of sharing what we have and instill a respect for the natural world. The children participate in food drives, diaper donations and a Holiday Giving Wreath. As a program we sponsor many local activities and teams, have volunteer teachers at the Burlington Polar Express in support of Vermont Children's Trust. We also support progressive organizations such as the Annual Outright VT Fire Truck pull.



ENGAGING THE WIDER COMMUNITY

At First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse (FRWR) We use our geographical position as well as being the second largest private employer in Hinesburg to embed our students and teachers in the larger community. We participate in many outreach opportunities, and enjoy taking walking field trips throughout Hinesburg and Jericho.

WHAT OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS DOES FRWR AND ITS EMPLOYEES SUPPORT?

We are a member of Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility and we encourage our staff to become engaged with the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) via a FRWR paid membership. Locally, we campaigned with Let's Grow Kids to support new childcare legislation and annually participate in Early Childhood Day at the Legislature to protect a positive future for the field of early childhood education. We work with Outright Vermont to ensure that all of our learning spaces are an inclusive and supportive place for every child.

WHAT DOES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT LOOK LIKE FOR A TEACHER?

Community engagement takes many forms in and out of the classroom. Teachers often lead children on off campus daily adventures on trails and towns which instills a sense of place and purpose.

"The leadership team has supported me by caring about me...and is supportive in numerous ways. I felt so welcomed when I started and am shown appreciation often"

Preschool Teacher, First Roots-Wild Roots

Teachers have the opportunity to volunteer at community events as well as help plan events for the community at FRWR. Our teachers are recognized as experts in the field and often sit on various education panels, lead ECE workshops and write articles for the local papers. Because of our outdoor focus, we have been consulted by the local Town Park committee to help advise on changes to local green spaces.



"Keep Kids Wild" – First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse

HOW WILL FRWR SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS OR OUTSIDE INTERESTS THAT I AM PASSIONATE ABOUT?

If you are committed to an organization or event that fits into the mission of the school, we will gladly support you in your endeavor. We have had teachers form an FRWR team to run in road race fundraisers. We have even pulled a fire truck up Church Street in Burlington to support LGBTQ youth. Most recently, FRWR has formed a sponsored Pickleball team that plays locally.

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BUILDING A COMMUNITY

Info Sheet B3: *Supporting our Teachers – A Fun and Fulfilling work environment*

OUR DEDICATED HUMAN RESOURCES

We have a dedicated Director of People and Culture. They support teachers as professionals. This means a great deal of their role is to listen to what is important to our employees and create solutions that encompasses their values and aspirations. Minimal out of office hour trainings, weekly co-teacher planning time, a three teacher per classroom model are ways that our program culture has created new opportunities for work/life balance that are meaningful to our employees.



SUPPORTING TEACHERS AS PEOPLE.

At First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse (FRWR), We know that in order to have a sustainable community of teachers, we need to support our staff as individual people. That is why we have dedicated a significant part of our administration team to focus on creating a healthy workplace culture. A human resources function seeks to understand what is important to people in their work environment and what they value in a job. We work with our staff to understand these needs and then create flexible solutions to incorporate them in our workplace.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS FRWR SUPPORTS TEACHERS AS PEOPLE?

First, we take the time to let our employees know how much we appreciate them. From recognition of 5,10,15, 20 and 25 year bonuses, to a full week of administration led Teacher Appreciation activities. Second, we have a dedicated members of our Leadership Team to support and guide teachers, which includes a full-time coach, Program Directors, Professional development guides and a dedicated Director of People and Culture. These are significant resources to help teachers in the classroom and allow them to do what they enjoy - teach rather than administration.

WHAT ABOUT PAY AND BENEFITS?

We have one goal and one promise. We are committed to paying each of our employees a livable wage. But more than that. We have set an ambitious target of providing a median salary which allows our teachers to maintain a 2 bedroom apartment in Chittenden County.

“It feels so meaningful to have the team looking out for the best interests of staff by way of working in a winter break in February. ...these breaks are really important & appreciated”

Infant Teacher, First Roots-Wild Roots



"Keep Kids Wild" – First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse

There are, of course, other tangible employment benefits. (See info sheet S3). But we also maintain a people-focused culture with such things as pop-up bagel breakfasts catered in service lunches, sponsored flu shots, LL Bean fleece coats and Helly Hansen waterproof outdoor pants and rain bibs.

WHAT ARE THE FACILITIES LIKE FOR FRWR STAFF?

There are not too many programs with an in-ground pool where staff are free to swim during the summer -- but we are one! We have two staff rooms with access to Internet, comfortable couches, refrigerator and a microwave. We even have a creamee machine an espresso coffee machine & ice-maker so that teachers can enjoy their downtime.

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BUILDING A COMMUNITY

Info Sheet B4: *First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse (FRWR): Farm to EE Program Approach*

WHAT IS THE FARM TO EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM?

In 2025, First Roots-Wild Roots and the Treehouse were awarded a Farm to Early Education program by The Vermont Department of Agriculture. The Farm to Early Education program is built on the philosophy that healthy habits start early and are most impactful when they are hands-on, locally relevant, and integrated into a child's everyday environment. Rooted in our core values of sustainability, community engagement, and outdoor education, our program connects young children to fresh, locally grown foods and the farmers who produce them, while fostering curiosity, responsibility, and a love for nature.



ENGAGING THE WIDER COMMUNITY IN FOOD SECURITY

The purpose of this program, “The Full Plate Garden Project” is to enrich early childhood education by integrating local food systems into a early educational setting. This includes encouraging our families to locally source food for meals and snacks, gardening activities, food-based education, and connections with local farms. The ultimate goal is to support the physical, cognitive, and social development of children while strengthening community food systems and increasing access to nutritious, seasonal foods by partnering with two local farms, Shelburne Farms and the Hinesburg Food Shelf.

WHAT BENEFITS DOES FRWR HOPE TO SEE WITH THIS GRANT?

There are multiple benefits to children, families and the wider community. For our children, there will be increased exposure to and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, development of healthy eating habits from a young age and an improved understanding of where food comes from and how it grows. The curriculum provides enhanced sensory learning through tasting, planting, harvesting, and cooking.

“Starting children off with a solid foundation of nutritious food experiences and active lifestyles helps form healthy behaviors early in life which can last a lifetime”

Shelburne Farms, Grant Partner

Stronger motor skills, critical thinking, and cooperation by growing food for ourselves and others through garden and group activities will be developed. For families, we hope to see greater access to local, seasonal foods, opportunities to engage in healthy eating and gardening practices at home, and stronger home-school-community connections. For the local community we hope to support the local farmers and producers through increased awareness of the importance of sustainable agriculture and through partnerships with two farms, increase food access to all.

WHAT WILL THIS GRANT LOOK LIKE AT THE FRWR PROGRAMS?



"Keep Kids Wild" – First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse

The grant will be activated over 24 months. It includes an ambitious plan to increase our food growing footprint (already well established) across all our centers. We will invest in a small greenhouse plus cold frames for our smaller sites so that they can lengthen the growing season at those sites. It will include farm visits, family food nights focused on cooking and gardening, storytime featuring agriculture-themed books, composting and recycling projects for sustainability education as well as onsite gardening and farmer visits. It will also look like wagons of fresh food being delivered to Hinesburg Community Resource Center and Jericho Food Shelf by children on a weekly basis.

HOW WILL THIS GRANT IMPACT OUR FUTURE DIRECTION?

The Farm to ECE program is more than a nutrition initiative—it is an investment in our children's future, our local economy, and the health of our communities. Through this program, we will plant seeds of curiosity, wellness, and stewardship that will grow for years to come.

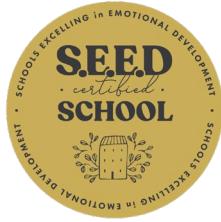
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The Mission of First Roots - Wild Roots and The Treehouse is to provide quality early care and education in order to understand each child's unique developmental profile. We strive to Achieve the highest level of professional development, Build a community where families feel connected to one another and to the wider community, and Cultivate sustainable environmental choices and business practices to support the health and wellness of all who work and play here!

CREATING SUSTAINABILITY

Info Sheet C1: *Sustaining our Healthy Environment.*

OUR GREEN SPACES

Our Hinesburg program is fortunate to be located on three acres of green space with a view of the Adirondacks. We have 9 individual playspaces and use natural materials such as rocks, Willow huts and wooden bridges. We have access to 50+ acres of CVSD land to explore. Our Underhill location has a dedicated playspace plus access to many acres of parklands within walking distance at Mills Riverside Park.

We also have access to the little woods that provides all our children with an opportunity to explore, safely build shelters and safely try their developing skills with some low rock climbing in summer and “otter slides” in the winter.

We have embarked on a multi year play scape, design and rebuild. We are focused on using natural materials and local artisans to design and build this.



**Eco-Healthy
Child Care®**

ECO CERTIFICATION AND OUR GREEN SPACES

We believe that a healthy and safe environment without chemicals is essential for early learning and development. We have partnered with the Children's Environmental Health Network (CEHN.org) to be certified Eco Healthy since 2013.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ECO HEALTHY CERTIFIED?

It's a commitment to avoid the use of toxic chemicals in our program. We also look to use sustainable and safe materials such as low emission sustainable flooring throughout our buildings as we remodel.

HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN ECO HEALTHY CERTIFICATION?

We need to maintain 24 out of 30 items set out in an environmental checklist. These cover areas such as recycling air quality household chemicals art supplies plastic toys and equipment and pesticides.

“First Roots-Wild Roots and the Treehouse was one of the first programs in Vermont to be Eco Healthy Certified. We have maintained this commitment for over 12 years”

Eco-Coordinator, First Roots-Wild Roots

WHAT OTHER STEPS HAVE YOU TAKEN TO BE AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS?

All our cleaning products are environmentally safe or organic, including our hand soaps we use in our preschool and staff bathrooms. As we refresh each of our classrooms, we replaced all carpets with sustainable flooring. We have metered push button bathroom faucets and low flush toilets to minimize our water consumption. We use UV sanitizers to minimize our chemical usage in our in ground swimming pool used to provide swim lessons in the summer months. We use commercial air purifiers in every room. This improves air quality and reduces the spread of respiratory and airborne illnesses.



"Keep Kids Wild" – First-Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse

ABOUT US

First Roots-Wild Roots is an Early Education Center with programs in Hinesburg and Underhill, Vermont. We are a 5 STAR nature based early-care and education program who believe in play-based, outdoor experiences that are appropriate to each child's developmental level. We serve ages 6 weeks to 8 years.

HOW WE ARE DIFFERENT

We value each family as a child's first teacher and are committed to building a community where families feel connected to one another, and to the greater Hinesburg and Underhill communities. As an Eco-healthy childcare certified program, we are also committed to making sustainable environmental choices and business practices both inside and outside of the classroom. We achieved SEED certification in 2024. Our head teachers all have degrees in early childhood and participate in professional development coursework that benefits our classrooms in unique ways. We are a dedicated community that values nature-based outdoor learning children, families and staff and we hope that you share in our vision! We are proud to be LGBTQ+ affirming community that values *inclusion not exclusion!*

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CREATING SUSTAINABILITY

Info Sheet C2: *Planning for a Sustainable Employee Compensation Plan.*

OUR 5 YEAR BENEFITS PLAN FOR TEACHERS

We are committed to providing a salary for our teachers that allows each of them to afford to rent a two-bedroom apartment in Vermont.

By 2026, at least 50% of our full-time employees will earn a salary that the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition states is required to independently afford a two-bedroom apartment in Chittenden County.

We are also committed to providing a flexible approach to our employees' work hours where possible through the implementation of a 3-teacher model in every classroom.

We have added additional paid time off for all our teachers which now includes a Winter and Spring break.

Ultimately, we intend to leverage the the three teacher model to allow for a 4 day working week or a shorter day.

HOW IS FRWR THINKING ABOUT IMPROVED SALARIES?

Recent State funding has allowed us to increase the tenure and sustainability of our staff through enhanced levels of professional compensation. In 2021, FRWR embarked on an rolling 5-year plan to increase our base salaries to levels that are comparable to similar professionals and which are benchmarked to an Affordable Housing Index (see inset). Recent legislative changes have allowed us to push forward this initiative. We are proud that we already exceed the VtAEYC proposed minimum compensation standards (*Power to the Profession*) for the starting salaries of our Assistant and Associate levels (ECE I and II equivalent) and well on our way to achieving salary parity with K-12 Public school Educators for our ECE Licensed Teachers (ECE III) and beyond.

ECE Credential	VtAEYC Base Salary	First Roots - Wild Roots Base Salary range as of 3/1/2025
Uncredentialed	\$31,200	(Assistant) \$42,120- \$56,680
ECE I	\$35,880	(Associate) \$44,200-\$58,760
ECE II	\$44,850	(Teacher) \$46,280 - \$60,840
ECE III	\$56,062	(Licensed Teacher) \$48,320-\$62,880

VtAEYC numbers as described by Sherry Carlson in *Advancing Early Childhood as a Profession: What's the Latest?*, professional development session, November 2022

IN WHAT WAYS HAVE WE CHANGED OR WILL CHANGE HOW OUR TEACHER'S WORK?

In the initial phase of our bold new HR Strategy, in Spring 2025, we increased staff and added a full-time third teacher to each of our classrooms. This has enabled smaller groups and provided additional one-to-one attention as needed.

“We are committed to a future goal for our three teacher model that will provide a shorter workday to all our professional staff”.

Executive Director, First Roots-Wild Roots and the Treehouse

As well as lower teacher:child ratios within the classroom, this allowed us to increase program hours for our families without impacting the length of our teacher's workday. Once we have the 3-teacher model



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secure, phase 2 of our plan aims to build a model that could actually *reduce* the work hours for our staff (to perhaps **37.5 hrs. per week**) while maintaining service hours for our families and children in care. This will tremendously impact the sustainability of our teachers.

HOW DOES THE 3-TEACHER MODEL WORK?

There are now three full-time teachers in each classroom. The third teacher is an integral part of each classroom team and qualified as such. They participate fully in class planning, curriculum building and student observations. They prepare for and attend parent conferences for the classroom.

HOW DO WE INTEND TO IMPACT THE WORK-LIFE CHALLENGES FOR TEACHERS IN THE FUTURE?

While increased benefits may be a short-term solution to address the critical ECE teacher shortage in Vermont, we believe that a more systemic change is required to attract and maintain professionals. Early Education is a challenging profession that requires robust knowledge of child development and a unique skillset to promote playful learning. We acknowledge that the traditional model of a 40-hour/week and 52-week year is unsustainable for teachers and burnout is a growing concern. The three-teacher model will provide our program with flexibility to shorten the work hours, providing a better work-life balance for our teachers and make it easier for them to say "yes" to ECE as a long-term profession.

ABOUT US

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HOW WE ARE DIFFERENT

We value each family as a child's first teacher and are committed to building a community where families feel connected to one another, and to the greater Hinesburg and Underhill communities. As an Eco-Healthy childcare certified program, we are also committed to making sustainable environmental choices and business practices both inside and outside of the classroom. We achieved SEED certification in 2024. Our head teachers all have degrees in early childhood and participate in professional development coursework that benefits our classrooms in unique ways. We are a dedicated community that values nature-based outdoor learning children, families and staff and we hope that you share in our vision! We are proud to be LGBTQ+ affirming community that values *inclusion not exclusion!*



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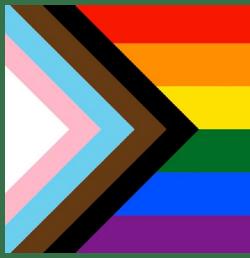
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CREATING SUSTAINABILITY

Info Sheet C3: *Sustaining Our Employees – An Inclusive and Rewarding Place of Work.*

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS?

Sustainability to us means a commitment to operating with compassionate business practices, providing employees with a livable income, cultivating employee development, encouraging longer employee tenure, and low employee turnover with fair and transparent practices -- providing a open flow of information between employees, directors and owners. We also support our local communities and ethical expenditures and fiscal decisions. It means working towards a diverse, ethical and anti-racist workplace that values inclusion not exclusion.



OUR SALARIES AND BENEFITS

The sustainability of our teachers is the key to our programs. We have made several commitments to our teachers to provide them with a sustainable career and one that provides a livable salary and wide range of benefits.

HOW DO YOU DETERMINE YOUR SALARIES?

Our base salaries are determined by 4 elements. Your educational background, your tenure within the early education profession, (how long have you been working with children), retention of our five STAR level and whether you have a Vermont teachers license with an early education endorsement. Our 2025 current starting salaries range from \$42-\$53K depending on these factors. Generally, you should expect a \$2 - \$3k increase per year for the first three years.

WHAT OTHER ELEMENTS CAN IMPACT MY SALARY LEVELS?

As discussed in our career development info sheet. You may be eligible for an increase based upon your performance against the behavioral competencies. In addition, if you achieve licensure or complete additional college credits, your base compensation will increase.

“FRWR and the Treehouse is committed to compensating our employees at a livable level which allows them to comfortably rent their own 2-bedroom apartment in Chittenden County”

Business Director, First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse

WHAT ABOUT YOUR BENEFITS?

All of our teachers receive at least 80 hours of personal time off (PTO) in their 1st full year. In addition, we are closed for 3 weeks (December, February and July). This is paid (with no PTO deduction for employees). Teachers with more than three years tenure get an additional 40 hours of PTO. We offer \$1200 per year health costs reimbursement account, a 50% employer paid dental coverage and a \$500/year tuition reimbursement plan.



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We also provide access to group vision care benefits. We offer short-term disability at no cost to the employee. Please ask us for specific details about these and more benefits.

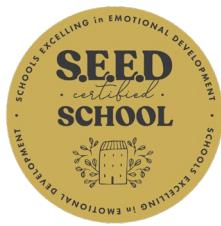
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CREATING SUSTAINABILITY

Info Sheet C4: *First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse (FRWR): Our Nature Based Programs*

WHAT IS A NATURE BASED CHILDCARE PROGRAM?

The North American Association for Environmental Education describes nature-based program “as an educational approach where nature is a central element for learning, development, and stewardship, taking place primarily in natural settings”. As a nature based program, we emphasize experiential, hands-on learning that fosters environmental literacy, healthy child development, and a sense of connection to the natural world. FRWR focuses on play-based activities, allowing children to explore, interact with, and care for their environment, ultimately building reciprocity with nature and love for our planet.



OUR NATURE BASED PROGRAM

At our nature-based programs nestled in the beautiful landscapes of Vermont, teaching is more than a profession — it's an invitation to wonder, discover, and is a connection with the natural world. We believe that children (and educators!) learn best when they are free to move, explore, and engage deeply with their environment — and in Vermont, that means *outside* in all four seasons. ***We believe if educators look forward to their day, they will sustain themselves and our programs.***

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO WORK IN A NATURE BASED PROGRAM?

As a teacher here, your classroom extends beyond its four walls into the woods, the meadow, the stream — and yes, sometimes our cozy lodge when the snow piles high. You'll guide learning through hands-on exploration, storytelling, observation, and play, helping children build curiosity, resilience, and deep relationships with the natural world.

Our teachers and children spend the majority of our time outdoors, year-round. That means teachers are active participants in the adventure, alongside the children — tracking animal prints in the snow, building stick shelters, watching the seasons change, and learning something new every day.

HOW DO WE EQUIP OUR TEACHERS TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN A NATURE BASED PROGRAM?

We have a strong teacher preparation relationship with Antioch University – one of the leading academic institutions building the Outdoor Education network. We uphold ECE professional practices to support safety and learning in nature. We know that comfort and safety outdoors is essential. That's why we provide high-quality outdoor clothing and gear for all our teachers, including LL Bean fleece jackets & waterproof rain pants. Our goal is to make sure you're fully equipped to enjoy the outdoors.

“As a Nature Based program, FRWR embraces a teaching style that values curiosity, spontaneity, and presence over rigid schedules and testing. It provides a freedom and joy I've not experienced in other programs”

School Age Teacher, First Roots-Wild Roots



"Keep Kids Wild" – First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse

The ongoing training in nature-based education, child development, and outdoor risky play results in days that are at a slower, richer pace guided by the rhythms of nature, not bells or buzzers. Children learn to make decisions when they are moving their bodies through space, speed, height and by using tools – and by co-creating safety plans with their peers and teachers.

WHAT TYPE OF TEACHER WILL THRIVE IN OUR ENVIRONMENT?

We have found that educators who are inspired by the outdoors and child-led learning, are comfortable in all weather conditions, eager to grow and learn with a supportive team and committed to nurturing a love of nature in the next generation are best equipped to succeed and enjoy working at FRWR.

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