



# First Roots-Wild Roots

## Family Handbook

**\*\*\*Until further notice, these are our current Covid-19 protocols: classrooms remain in pods, adults need to mask when dropping off children inside, drop-off times are staggered and there are no family visits inside.**

## First Roots-Wild Roots Family Handbook

First Roots-Wild Roots is a 5 STAR child-centered early care and education program serving families with children ages 6 weeks to 8 years with specific programs for birth to three years, three to five years and after school for Kindergarten through age 8. We support intentional, play-based, hands-on experiences that are appropriate to each child's developmental level, and value each family as a child's first teacher. We welcome your family as a part of ours!

Our mission is to understand and support each child's unique developmental profile by achieving the highest level of professional learning for our staff, building a community where families feel respected and connected to the wider Hinesburg community, and cultivating sustainable business practices and environmental choices for everyone who works and plays here.

Our core values support the development of the "whole" child as a unique individual within their family system, and as a member of our entire community.

We seek:

1. To provide every child with engaging opportunities to learn through play in the outdoor environment, supported by trained teachers adept at nurturing diverse early learning experiences.
2. To help each child develop a positive self-image, and believe they are capable of doing hard things, challenging themselves with an appropriate amount of risk that they seek and are ready to accept at that time.
3. To help each child learn about and acknowledge their own feelings and the feelings of others as healthy, and to learn how to create positive social interactions with peers and teachers.
4. To guide each child using an inquiry-based approach to learning through hand-on experiences and investigations based on their deep areas of interest.
5. To promote developmentally appropriate learning in language, literacy and communication, creative expression, science, mathematics, whole body movement, social interactions, self-regulation and approaches to learning which are consistent with the Vermont Early Learning Standards.
6. To help foster the respect of all people, our natural environment and our creative learning materials and to honor the diversity in our world and the peoples and animal systems that inhabit the world with us.

7. To offer support to the families of our children through resources, conferences, referrals, parent gatherings, workshops and a parent committee.

First Roots-Wild Roots is an equal opportunity employer, and does not deny any child's entry into the program because of race, creed, color, national origin, religion, disability, gender or parents' marital status or gender identification.

### **The Curriculum**

We utilize a nature-based emergent curriculum approach which is inspired by the practices of Reggio Emilia schools in Italy. Emergent Curriculum is recognized by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) to be a best practice in the early education field today. It is child-centered and focused around the competencies, interests and needs of the children along with the passions of the teachers. Central is the belief that there are a "hundred languages of children" and that each child learns in multiple ways and through various interests and materials. Learning is the result of a continuous cycle of inquiry using areas of deep interest to the children, exhibited through active play in the outdoors. Emergent Curriculum is a process in which teachers collaborate with children around their ideas, questions, development and topics of interest. The curriculum is intentional and teachers respond to children's ideas by proposing further activities for discovery, scaffolding knowledge, changing the environment, documenting the process and writing a plan for the curriculum that emerges.

When children understand that they belong to a learning community, that their ideas do matter, and that their questions can lead to deep problem solving and creative expression, then mastery motivation is truly born!

### **Classroom Ages/Structure**

The Infant classroom (Bumblebees) is for children aged 6 weeks to 1 year of age+/- . Enrollment is for full-time spots only. The Mobile Infant classroom (Caterpillars) is for children who are at least 12 mos - 24 mos. Enrollment is for part-time or full-time as openings allow. The Toddler Classrooms (Crickets and Beavers) are for children aged 24mos-36 years.

Transitions between the Toddler classes and a preschool classroom occur at three points in the year (mid Feb/mid June/late Aug) with respect to availability of space, family schedule and moving up with familiar peers. Ideally, a child will remain in a classroom for a minimum of 1 year before transitioning. In our mixed age preschool classrooms (Foxes, Chipmunks, Catamounts, Fireflies—half day, school year only) mean children stay for 2+ years and develop deep community bonds with their peers and teachers until they transition to Kindergarten. Each child will typically "move up" with friends whenever possible, and with sensitivity and consideration to the child's developmental level, family

input, child's need for individual support, temperament, class composition, class size, type of schedule, date of birth.

The teacher's and parent/guardian's roles in the transition process is to offer input to the Director on the child's development, interests, goals and friendships. All recommendations are welcomed and the Director accommodates them to the extent possible given the factors listed above and in the best interests of the child.

First Roots-Wild Roots is a year-round program with the exception of the Fireflies PreK and Treehouse After School program which offers part day programming that runs on the CVSD calendar. New enrollments in our full year program are typically admitted at points in the year when children already are transitioning (Feb/June/ Sept) or as space allows. Families will be included in the transition planning, and approximately 4-6 weeks prior to the date of transition, families will receive a welcome letter from the new classroom teachers, complete with pictures of the teachers, an invite to the Google Classroom, routine of the day, expectations, and an opportunity to visit prior to their child's arrival.

### **The Role of the Family**

Our philosophy is that every child grows and learns to their full potential when there is a strong home-school connection that exists for them. We work to support all of the relationships in a child's life as part of an ecological model because we know that both stress and joy impact the child in many primary and secondary ways throughout their life. This means that the home, school, relatives and the wider community work together to create harmony and good communication. Family members are considered an extended part of First Roots - Wild Roots and ongoing communication between home and school is expected on a daily basis. Families are a child's first teacher and they know them best - we are here to support you in that lifelong effort!

### **Family Involvement**

Family engagement in our program is a central part of our mission to "build relationships where families feel connected and respected" and as such we value opportunities to create and maintain strong home school connections with every family. These connections may be through welcome visits/tours, a currently enrolled family "buddy" for a new family, family events by classroom and by program, participation on the Parent Committee, through sharing child observations, family meetings about a child's development, scheduled bi-annual conferences and annual family surveys.

\* A visit to the school and a personal interview between parent, child and director to introduce our program mission, philosophy, practices, and policies is required before enrollment.

\* A welcome connection/name of a currently enrolled family for those who are new

to our program and/or VT.

\* Parents are encouraged to visit or volunteer at our school at any time. We believe families understand their child in unique and special ways and this supports our emergent curriculum topics and explorations. Please complete the family involvement survey and let us know how you can share a special talent, interest or activity!

\* Any suggestions, concerns, compliments or complaints about the daily care of your child should be brought first to your child's teacher. If the outcome is not satisfactory to you, we encourage you to speak to a director. We value strong home school connections between teachers and families. Open communication through phone, Google Meet, Google Classroom or in person conversation, notes, or emails is essential for every child to feel unconditionally supported at our school, and to secure transparent and strong home-school connections with families.

\*Families are strongly encouraged to join our Google Classroom which hosts daily communication of the day's curriculum, interests, adventures, questions and photos! We recommend that you use this as a portal to connect with your child and their teachers about the curriculum and share the photos for a deeper discussion at the end of the day.

\*Emailing our classroom address is recommended to communicate with teachers, both of whom have access to the account. You may also leave a voice message on our phone system and choose the classroom number on the directory and a recorded message will be sent to the classroom email account.

**\* If you change a contact number at home or work, it is essential to share the new contact details with us.** If an emergency should arise, we will refer to the telephone numbers you gave us when you registered.

\* If anyone other than parents/guardians will be picking up your child, we must be informed in **writing**. You may send an email to us or use the family/teacher communication notebook at the sign in sheet in your child's classroom. If we do not have written permission, your child will not be released, even if the person picking-up is on your list. This is Vermont law. All individuals listed on your alternate pick up list will be asked to show ID before your child is released to them.

\* Your child must be signed in and out daily by the adult that picks them up or drops them off. This is a VT licensing regulation, and we are bound as a licensed center to enforce it. We expect that you will arrive before our closing time in order to check in personally with the teacher at the end of the day. Never take your child from the class or playground without direct communication with the classroom teacher (or sub) prior to leaving. Our teachers use a variety of systems to account for every child's presence at all times (roll call, clipboards, sign in/out sheets). On the playground at the end of day,

supervision is even more important, and we ask that you partner with us in this daily effort.

\* Important notices will be posted on parent boards in each classroom (Google Classroom), and via email newsletters and announcements. Please keep your email address updated with the Director, as important notices are sent by email (to help us conserve paper resources.)

### Hours of Operation

<b>Infants</b>	<b>Bumblebees</b>	<b>Age 6 weeks-12 mos+/-</b>	<b>7:45AM-4:45PM</b>
<b>Mobile Infants</b>	<b>Caterpillars</b>	<b>12 mos – 24+ mos</b>	<b>7:45AM-4:45PM</b>
<b>Toddlers</b>	<b>Crickets Beavers</b>	<b>24 mos-36+ mos</b>	<b>7:45AM-4:45PM</b>

<b>Preschool</b>	<b>Foxes Chipmunks Catamounts</b>	<b>3 – 5 years</b>	<b>7:45AM –4:45PM</b>
<b>Part Day Preschool (mornings-CVSD calendar only)</b>	<b>Fireflies</b>	<b>3 – 5 years</b>	<b>8:45AM - 12:25PM (3hrs 25 min/day, 3 AM's 10 ¼ hrs/week)</b>
<b>After School Program</b>	<b>Treehouse Fisher Cats</b>	<b>5 – 8 years</b>	<b>M,T,Th,Fr: 3:00-5:00PM W: 2:00-5:00PM</b>
<b>School Age Vacation Camp</b>	<b>Treehouse</b>	<b>5 – 8 years</b>	<b>7:45AM-4:45PM CVSD Feb/Apr school vacation weeks, various days &amp; 8 weeks of summer</b>

**Please make every effort to arrive at school on time.** Late arrivals not only present a distraction for the entire class but make it more difficult for your child to have a successful transition to school.

We recognize that there are times when your family will need to schedule appointments during the day such as doctor appointments, dentist, Kindergarten visits, etc. Please notify the teachers in the communication log or by email that your child has an appointment. *If you pick up your child during the day for an appointment, we require that you keep your child out for the remainder of the day to avoid disruption of return transitions for your child and the rest of the class.* If you have a need to arrive late due to a morning appointment, we require that you arrive at school at an agreed upon transition time (such as coming in for lunch) so that your child can re-join and create a smooth day. *Arriving late should not be a daily practice, but rather is an accommodation we make for families for periodic health and wellness appointments.*

If you think you will be late to pick up, please call one of your emergency contacts so that they can pick up your child on time when these events arise. Our FRWR program closes promptly at 4:45PM, and Treehouse at 5:00PM.

## **Closings**

See attached annual calendar for First Roots-Wild Roots holiday closings, parent teacher conferences and professional learning days for our staff. Please note: The Part Day Preschool program runs for 10 months (Sept – June) and follows the CVSD school calendar.

While it is a rare occurrence that we close due to bad weather, we may opt for a delayed opening of 1, 1 ½ or 2 hours. Please visit **wcax.com** for all school delay/closing information where we will post by 6:00AM. You may also listen to the following radio stations if you are in doubt: WOKO 98.9FM, WVMT 620AM, or Channel 3 News. If CVSD is closed, the Treehouse after school program will be closed.

## **Emergency Notification System**

Beginning in Fall 2018, we have adopted an emergency notification system via voicemail and text message should we experience a utility problem or weather issue that requires us to close. Families must opt-IN to this message system in order to receive notifications. The director can send the link to you when you enroll. We will send an email to all families as a backup method for any closures and post a message on the voice mail system and Google Classrooms as well (802-482-2525).

## **Delayed Opening**

In the event of a **1- hour delay**, the full day classes will open at **8:45AM** and the Fireflies (morning part- day class) will be open at **9:45AM**.

In the event of a **2 hr delay**, full day classrooms will open at **9:45AM** and the Fireflies will open at **10:30AM**.

While we often follow the CVSD school delay/closures, we try to remain open for our working families as much as possible. However, the safety of our staff and families traveling on the roadways within the counties where our teachers reside is our primary concern when making the decision, as well as being able to secure appropriate teacher: child ratios at all times.

### **Tuition**

See attached tuition rates for the current year and specific program to which you wish to enroll. Tuition is due on Monday of the week early care and education services are provided. As of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, all accounts will require tuition payments to be automated via direct debit. We offer weekly, monthly and quarterly payment options, as well as a 10% sibling discount for the lower of the two tuition rates. **The published current prevailing tuition rates will apply to each billing period irrespective of the rates that applied when the child was initially registered.** We reserve the right to change tuition rates as required, and any tuition changes will be posted in December of each year and will take effect from February 1 following or March 1 if a quarter payor. An increase in tuition rates does not require a new signed agreement with you and is automatically applied if no withdrawal notice is received. Withdrawal Notice periods and initial deposits are dependent on the tuition period (weekly, monthly, quarter) as noted on the registration form and further below.

Act 166 PreK funding provides 10 hours of free early education programming for all children who are 3, 4, or 5 years old (and who are not enrolled in Kindergarten) on or before 9/1 for the funded school year. Act 166 funding can be applied in whole to 3 mornings of our part-day program (Fireflies) or in part to our full day preschool program. First Roots-Wild Roots is a pre-qualified provider with the Agency of Education and has been an Early Learning Partner since 2010. The intent of the funding is to support access for children to high quality preschool education and to enable sustainable community partnerships of equal educational standards to public school, including having licensed teachers with Early Education Endorsements on staff. In 2022/23, Act 166 provides \$3656 for each child who is enrolled in full time, part time and part day preschool programs over the course of 35 weeks during the school year beginning in September. It is the family's responsibility to enroll their child with the school district where they reside in order to access the funding at First Roots-Wild Roots. If a family enrolls in First Roots-Wild Roots but does not enroll with the school district in a timely way, the full tuition at First Roots-Wild Roots



may not be funded by the school district and the remainder is the responsibility of the family.

If a child transfers between programs mid year, Act 166 funding will follow the child and be sourced from the supervisory union where the child resides, and in proportion to the days attended in each program. Notice periods do apply for change in schedules and withdrawal of enrollment. Tuition at First Roots-Wild Roots is due until the notice period is complete. Act 166 funds will not be paid to our program if your child is not enrolled and attending our program. If you move residence, you must notify the supervisory union and First Roots-Wild Roots Director of the new school district so that your Act 166 funding can be redirected. It is essential that both school districts are notified at the same time so that when you exit from one district and re-apply to the new district they will transfer the remaining funds relative to the weeks used. If the school district does not cover the gap, you will be responsible for the full tuition costs in the interim.

If you enroll your child in the Part Day Preschool program for *more* than the 10 ¼ hours/week (that is, for a 4th or 5th morning), then this tuition is collected 10 times per year on Sept 1, Oct 1, Nov 1, Dec 1, Jan 1, Feb 1, Mar 1, Apr 1 May 1, June 1) via direct debit at the current tuition rates. Families who receive Act 166 funding will not be charged for 10 hours of early education for 35 weeks of the school year. A deposit (returnable at the end of the year in June) and a registration fee are required to enroll in the part-day program for 10 ¼ hrs per week).

Tuition is set in late November of the year and changes go into effect on March 1 of the following year. We make every effort to manage the tuition burden on families by working collectively with our legislators, VT Early Childhood Alliance, VTAEYC, and other early childhood advocates in the state to pursue investment in early childhood services so that it can be accessible, affordable and sustainable for all families with young children.

### **Dependent Care Employer Match**

If your employer offers a Dependent Care Account for your family, AND contributes to it on your behalf, then First Roots-Wild Roots will match the amount your employer contributes up to 5% of your child's tuition. We believe that all members of our community benefit from high quality early childhood programs because parents can be happy, relaxed and productive employees knowing that their child is in a high quality learning environment. We make this contribution as a way to advocate for the critical importance of early childhood in the lives of Vermont's families.

### **Program Offerings**

Our 5 STAR early education program serving our families' diverse needs across Chittenden and Addison counties, includes:

- full-year programming for families with children 6 weeks-8 years
- full day preschool hours (7:45AM-4:45PM) all-inclusive
- significant discounts for monthly or quarterly payment plans
- sibling and VBSR partner discounts
- Dependent Care Account Match
- no additional charge for materials
- approved provider for Child Care Financial Assistance Program
- prequalified provider for Act 166 preschool funding
- approved provider for Vermont Specialized Childcare Services
- 3+ acres of natural playscapes/woods to support our nature based philosophy and emergent curriculum
- mixed-age classes (age 3-5) to promote continuity of relationships with peers and families
- after school and summer camp programming for ages 5-8 to support sibling care and continuity of learning
- over 75 years of tenure and experience within the senior teaching team at  
First Roots-Wild Roots

### **Cancellation Policy/Program Departure**

If you wish to change your child's enrollment status and you wish to withdraw your child from our program, you are required to provide a 2 week written notice if you are paying weekly, a 1 month written notice if you are paying monthly or 1 quarter (3 month) notice if you are paying quarterly. You will receive credit in the amount of any prepaid tuition provided your account is current and your child is enrolled. Your deposit will be applied to your child's last week, ½ month or ½ quarter of programming. The registration fees are not refundable.

If it is determined that commitments and responsibilities are not being upheld by a parent/guardian, First Roots-Wild Roots reserves the right to terminate care with a 5 day notice. Non-payment of tuition when due may be cause for termination of care.

### **Health Regulations**

Children must wash their hands upon arrival at school. Parents must supervise. Children are required to have a pair of "indoor shoes" and a pair of "outdoor shoes" to maintain the health and cleanliness of our classroom.

Prior to admission, each child shall have had all immunizations for which they are age eligible for. **A copy of your child's immunization records shall be kept on file at the**

**school and should be updated annually or when new immunizations are received.**

Parents should inform the Director of any changes in their child's health status.

Medications may only be given to your child when accompanied by a signed medication form (available in all classrooms) and specific directions for administration. All medications must be in original containers.

If your child is sick and will be absent, please call the school and let us know. Our office will contact you by 9AM if your child does not attend on a regularly scheduled day.

If your child is seriously injured, you will be notified by phone at once. Minor scratches, cuts or bruises will be medically attended to at the center by the director or teacher and you will be notified at time of pick up. A hardcopy accident report will be completed and a copy will be provided to the parent on the same day or the next day if the event occurred late in the day.

**State of Vermont Child Care Licensing Regulations** can be found [here](#).

### **Health and Wellness Policies**

In order to provide the highest quality early learning experiences for the children in our school community, both they and the teachers that care for them must be physically healthy. The general health landscape is continually evolving and we have developed these all-inclusive health and wellness policies to encompass effective practices of illness mitigation in our Early Childhood Education programs.

Children who present with any of the following new onset, or worsening, symptoms may be asked to stay home to rest and monitor as well as connect with a physician and test as needed:

fever of 100.4°F+	nausea	vomiting	diarrhea
cough	shortness of breath	sore throat	fatigue or malaise
runny or stuffy nose	muscle aches	irritated eyes	behavioral change
sneezing	novel rash	loss of smell or taste	headache

Program directors will have the discretion to make a determination of a child's wellness at school. We consult with local healthcare professionals as well as state and federal agencies such as CDC and AAP to have a strong understanding of the landscape of illness that may be present in the school community at any point in time, and also when a child needs to take time at

home to rest due to illness. We will always use our best judgment to maximize every child’s health and learning and ask families to respect our position in this responsibility. **We can all help prevent the spread of illness by keeping sick children at home.** If you are notified that your ill child needs to go home, we ask that you, or a designee, pick up **within one hour**. In some cases, and when possible, a child may be removed from the classroom to allow them to rest and prevent further germ exposure to the classroom. In all instances of a sick child being picked up from school, we will ask that they remain home for at least the full day following the onset of symptoms at school to monitor for 24 hrs/1 day. In the event a child needs antibiotics, we will ask that they are home for at least 24 hours after beginning treatment.

If a child presents with new onset, or worsening, symptoms specifically of COVID-19, they will stay home and obtain an age-appropriate test (2 rapid antigen tests 24 hours apart for children 2+yrs, or a PCR test for children under 2) to determine if they are carrying the COVID-19 virus. A child with a positive test must stay home between 5-10 days. The earliest a child can return to school after a positive COVID test would be Day 6 with complete resolution of symptoms (including fever that has been resolved for at least 24 hrs without fever reducing medicine ). A child with lingering symptoms may return when they have been symptom free for 24 hours *or on day 11*, whichever comes first.

**Return to School Guidelines for Children age 6 weeks - 8 yrs:**

Community Close Contact COVID	Household Close Contact COVID	Positive for COVID-19	Symptomatic
If asymptomatic, continue to attend school and test on day 5 (PCR under age 2, Rapid Antigen test over age 2 on days 4 & 5).	<u>Under age 2</u> –stay home 5 days. Test on day 5 & return with negative PCR test result. <u>Over age 2</u> –Test daily with rapid antigen test for 10 days (child may return to school each day with neg result and no symptoms).	Isolate at home for 5 days. Return as early as day 6 with no symptoms. A child with lingering symptoms after day 5 may return when they have been symptom free for 24 hours or on day 11, whichever comes first.	Stay home with onset of new symptoms. Check in with your doctor and test as recommended. (2 rapid COVID tests taken 24 hrs apart for age 2+; PCR test age under 2).

In the event that a child has head lice, they will need to stay home until they are completely free from all lice and nits.

Whenever a class has been exposed to a communicable illness, we will notify families on the Google Classroom and post appropriate AAP resource guides. This policy may be revised and all updates will be communicated with the FRWR community via email, Google Classroom and Family Handbook.

**In all instances of child illness, families must consult with a program director prior to bringing your child back to school.**

### **“Babysitting” Policy**

Employees of First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse are professional early educators. Our employees are strongly encouraged not to be alone with enrolled children outside of program hours (e.g. “babysitting”) because it compromises the liability of our center and diminishes the professional teaching role of our staff. The program policies of First Roots-Wild Roots and The Treehouse are in place to ensure 5 STAR programming in accordance with VT state licensing regulations on our physical program site. Kindly do not request any of our teaching staff to perform babysitting services for your child(ren) offsite and/or outside of program hours.

### **Biting Policy**

One of the many benefits for children enrolled in a high quality early care and education program is the opportunity for them to be exposed to social interactions with peers, learn to regulate responses when waiting, and to develop adaptive skills (such as zipping up coats, putting on boots, using utensils, etc.). In addition, children learn that their needs will be consistently met by teachers through sensitive and appropriate responses for his or her age and developmental level. In a group toddler setting, frustration is to be expected, and one child biting another is often a common response, albeit very upsetting to both sets of parents!

When one child bites, or physically hurts another, our approach in the classroom is consistent with [NAEYC](#) and [Zero to Three's](#) best practice which supports clear and direct verbal intervention with the goal of setting expectations for behavior, identifying feelings, and supporting empathy by helping others.

An accident report is completed which is given to the parent of the child who was hurt. This report shows the name of the injured child, the date, the classroom, the time, a description of the incident, what was done to help, the outcome and the signature of the teacher. No identifying information of the other party is shared with families in order to maintain and respect the confidentiality of all involved.

The director will contact the parents of the injured child to notify them of the incident. The director will also contact the parents of the child who bit/hurt another

child. As part of our dedication to building a community and strengthening the home school connection, we encourage dialogue between parents and teachers about their child's sensitivities, stress points, and enjoyable activities. This is essential for our teachers to understand a child's behavior at home, and to build shared expectations and preventive measures for successful behavior in both learning environments!

## **Allergies**

Effective on September 1, 2018, we will no longer practice a center-wide allergy policy, but rather allergy accommodations will be made for children on a class by class basis. Allergy notifications will be posted at the entries to the classroom (without identifying any child) and communicated to all staff in a confidential manner. Staff will be made aware of any/all allergies in the program so that when classrooms come together to visit for activities, on the playground, etc. they are fully prepared. Any family with a child experiencing a new allergy should immediately notify the Director in writing of the specific allergen, including any contingency or medical instructions that are in place for the child.

This means that you may pack snacks and lunches which contain nuts at this time. If any new allergy (including nuts) develops within your child's classroom, you will be notified by the teachers of the precautions and we will require that you follow them if/when the need arises. We are committed to the safety of every child, and to working with families to achieve this.

## **Clothing**

Your child will need at least one complete change of clothing at the center. This includes shirts, pants, underwear, socks and indoor shoes.

Please dress your child appropriately for the weather. This includes a MUDDY BUDDY or TUFFO type mud/rain suit all year round. During the winter months, please be sure to send your child in three layers: base layer (for wicking away moisture), play layer (e.g. fleece) and outer layer (waterproof suit, coat, pants) as well as several hats, pairs of mittens, and lined boots. Make sure to **LABEL ALL CLOTHING** brought to our center as many items look alike in color, size and brand. It is your responsibility to monitor and replenish your child's cubby with enough (but not too much!) clothing.

Parents are responsible for providing all diapers and wipes for children in the birth to three program or until their child is potty trained.

When your toddler shows signs of independent pottyng (pulling pants up and down, recognizing when they are wet/soiled, saying they are "peeing" at the time, staying dry for several hours and are interested in trying to sit on a toilet), we will fully support this learning in cooperation with your family efforts at home. This is the time

to bring in lots of extra pairs of underpants/clothing so that your child can master this important skill successfully and positively!

### **Meals and Beverages**

Children are required to bring their own snacks (morning & afternoon) as well as lunches (for our full day programs). Please be sure your child comes to school having had a full breakfast and is well rested. Our morning snack takes place between 9-9:30AM, so please avoid giving your child food or breakfast snacks upon arrival. We are required to supervise children while eating and this is not possible when only 1 teacher is in the class (7:45-8:00am) and their attention is required elsewhere.

Each child should bring in a water bottle to keep at school where it is sanitized daily. All water bottles must go home on Fridays and return freshly filled on Monday. *Please do not bring in any other beverages from home or send in chocolate, candy, sweets and gum.*

In the infant room, parents must provide bottles, food, diapers, wipes, bibs, and a crib sheet for the pack and play (school provided) and at least 2 extra sets of clothes to be kept at the center.

### **Holidays and Celebrations**

We welcome an inclusive community where we learn about and honor the unique celebrations that are important to our families. We are mindful of the diversity of our families and so do not actively celebrate commercial calendar events, but rather choose to celebrate our curriculum discoveries with families, the arrival of new siblings, the beginning and end of the seasons. We are mindful that holidays can also be reminiscent of difficult moments and feelings for some children and families, and as such make every effort to ensure that every child and family feels seen and welcomed in our celebrations during the year.

We welcome learning about your family's unique celebrations here at school at any time of the year. If you choose to celebrate your child's birthday in school, please feel free to bring in a **healthy treat** to celebrate the special occasion. Examples include:

Fruit kabobs with cheese cubes, muffins, veggie trays with ranch dressing, ants on a log (celery with peanut butter and raisins), etc.

There are many birthdays in our program and we ask that families limit sweet foods to celebrations at home only.

### **Rest Time (full day programs only)**

Rest time varies by age of child, but lasts up to 2 hours depending on the group. All children will be provided an opportunity to rest, but are not required to sleep. Rest is always right after lunch. Please do not drop off or pick up your child during rest time without securing special permission from your child's teacher or the Director.

For our full day programs, your child will need a rest mat (all-in-one pillow, mat and cover is recommended) for rest time. We have found it helps many children to have a transitional item for resting (special blanket, stuffed animal etc.). Please bring the rest mat in a labeled reusable bag so that it can be stored and kept separate from other mats. We have limited space in our classroom for bedding, so we encourage you to bring in something compact. More importantly, manageable sized rest mats help your preschool child learn to roll up their bedding and put it away themselves. We provide a mat for your child to use between their bedding and the floor.

All bedding will be sent home on Fridays (or end of week) to be laundered and returned on Monday.

### **Child Assessment/Family Conferences**

Ongoing observation, documentation and child assessment is a regular part of our 5 STAR early care and education program and required by the state for PreK Act 166 funding. Family conferences are held twice a year in November and May. At that time, there will be a parent/teacher sign-up sheet emailed to you or shared on Google Classroom. You may sign up for a time that is most convenient for you. This will be an opportunity for you to discuss your child's interests, strengths, learning and social relationships with his/her peer group. We highly value the home-school connection to foster the optimal growth and learning for your child, and will ask for your participation in the teacher/parent conference process. Conferences may be arranged at any other time of the year at your request.

At frequent intervals, such as upon enrollment, upon transition to a new classroom, or in the last year before Kindergarten, we use the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) with children ages 6 weeks – 5 years to better understand the developmental level of each child. This tool has a family component so that parents/guardians can provide their observations of the child's development at home and share with your child's teacher. If there are any questions or concerns which are raised, both the parents and teachers will meet to discuss the similarities, differences and concerns. The results may indicate that further evaluation is not necessary at that time in which case teachers will continue to observe in more detail. If the results indicate a possible developmental concern, the Director will observe the child and assist with further evaluation steps, which includes consulting with the family for consent to invite observation by additional early childhood experts, and/or a referral for a comprehensive evaluation by a multidisciplinary team from Children's Integrated Services (0-3yrs) or EEE for ages



3-5yrs. This is a collaborative process with the family and the results of these evaluations will be shared with the parents and the teachers in a team meeting and will result in a set of recommendations for next steps which either confirm or deny a developmental delay, and propose appropriate services if needed. Our staff work hand in hand with service providers so that children who are eligible for further developmental support can receive services within a familiar play-based environment (such as the classroom).

### **Field Trips**

We occasionally take the children on field trips in our school van and will provide at least 1 week advance notice before they occur. Two teachers always accompany groups of 6 or more in the van, and the van seats 13 children. The van is equipped with safety harnesses which are adjustable and appropriate for young children. A permission slip must be signed and returned for each child for each trip. If there is a cost for the trip, this must be paid prior to departure. Please make sure that the necessary arrangements are made if you are planning an irregular pick up or drop off on one of these days.

Walking field trips occur daily as a part of our outdoor programming, and exploration of the Hinesburg community, and CVU trails. Individual permission slips are not required for these spontaneous events, as we ask for your signed permission upon enrollment for walking excursions.

### **Outside Time and our Natural Playscapes**

We have cultivated and developed 11 fenced, natural play spaces on our 3+ acre campus: the Bumblebee Back Deck and Gazebo, The Lower Valley, The Treehouse Playground, the Preschool Playground, the Caterpillar Playground, the Lower Meadow, Mutton's Meadow, the Lower Woods, the Upper Woods, the figure-8 Storywoods and the Courtyard.

Every classroom gets outside every day! Our center wide expectation is that children will be outside twice a day for a minimum of an hour each time. In colder weather months (or more extreme heat days) we use the rule of thumb as follows:

The air temperature including the REAL FEEL temp = # of minutes we spend outside. For example, if the temperature is 30 degrees F, with a "real feel" of 20 degrees F, we will stay outside for 20 minutes. Often, we will come back in, read a book while we warm up, and then go right back out if we can! Likewise, we are mindful of the heat index in the summer months, and always provide water in water bottles (with scheduled water breaks for everyone), water in coolers on the playground, and utilize shade accordingly while we are out.

In the infant and mobile infant room, we have access to two 8-seater strollers with stadium seating for outings. We also go outside on the deck area adjacent to the

Bumblebees kitchen which has a commercial grade awning that covers the deck with awning fabric that is rated at 50+ Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF) which eliminates > 97.5% rays. Our gazebo and Little Valley is connected to this play space with a series of gates for maximum supervision and sight lines. The Caterpillars, our 1's class, has direct access to a fenced hilly play area with birch trees, grass, sand box, tree stumps, mud kitchen, planter boxes, mini wheel barrows, outdoor mirror and a hammock for play. This means we expect every infant and toddler to have a snowsuit for these outings in spring, fall and winter, as well as a hat, and mittens. In summer and fall months, sunscreen is provided by parent/guardian (if >6 mos), etc. so that mobile children can participate in this essential part of our learning day!

### **Guns/Weapons**

First Roots-Wild Roots is a gun and weapon-free zone. No firearms are allowed on the property at any time. Likewise, please leave any toy weapons or toy guns at home. This includes toy vehicles of war such as tanks with weaponry. If you have any questions about what might be appropriate, please ask the Director.

### **Toys/Special Items from Home**

All young children at the preschool are encouraged to bring a "lovey" or a transitional object from home for use at *rest time*. It should remain in your child's cubby, or with their rest bedding and used only at rest time. In the older classes (toddlers +) we ask that any toy from home be kept in the cubby, or remain at home unless it is a dedicated "share day" in the class for your child. Share days are days when teachers invite children to bring in a toy from home to share in a circle time, allow others to hold/look at the item, and ask questions and make connections to their experience too. Toys that arrive from home other than on share days can prove to be a distraction to the daily routine, and cause upset for your child if others wish to play with it. In addition, there is a risk that a special item could get broken or lost at school, and this can cause further upset which we try to avoid.

### **Suspected Abuse/Neglect**

All of our staff are trained to detect signs of abuse and neglect in children. We share these signs to help you understand the important role we share in caring for and protecting children. We will do daily observations and will ask you about any new injuries and if any special care is required. Likewise, we will provide written reports of any injuries sustained by your child while in our care. We highly value a strong home - school partnership with your family to maintain the safety of your child at all times.

## **Confidentiality**

All personal information regarding families and children is treated as confidential. Staff and Directors will provide a safe and secure place for family files. Staff and Directors will exercise professional discretion regarding conversations with each other, parents or children concerning personal information or family matters.

## **No Smoking Policy**

First Roots-Wild Roots is a non-smoking early care and education program. Staff, parents and volunteers are not permitted to smoke anywhere on the property.

## **Child Behavior Guidance Policy**

Our child behavior guidance policy is based on a positive guidance approach in which behavior is managed first by setting expectations in the classroom for appropriate use of toys and interactions. Our policy is based on the premise that young children are still learning appropriate methods of social interaction and expression of feelings and need to be supported and taught how to manage a conflict, and not punished because they have a problem that they do not yet know how to solve. We also view young children's behavior as a language which helps us to respond to unmet needs that may require further understanding.

When conflicts arise, we use a 5- step dialogue to address a variety of situations and support children. The teacher facilitates by first helping children to **identify feelings** ("I see that you are feeling frustrated/mad/upset..." -cool off), followed by **identifying the problem** objectively ("I see one toy here and two children who are upset"), and helping children **identify a possible solution** ("what could we do to change/fix/make this better?"), **try out** the solution, and then "**check back in**" with the friend to see how that solution is working. For younger ages, we talk about turn taking (e.g. "Tommy is using that toy, your turn is next." or redirection to another activity or toy ("You can choose the blocks or the books while you wait for that toy"). Children whose behavior disrupts the classroom will be redirected to make a safe choice for themselves in another area in the room before they are invited to try again.

If a child's behavior continues to be an obstacle to their full participation in the program, or continually prevents others from safe participation as well, the teachers and Director will seek to collaborate with families to make focused observations, seek more information, problem solve, provide additional resources, and if needed, offer a referral for further evaluation to support the child in our classroom setting. If the safety of the child and/or his or her peers is compromised, the child's parent may be called to

pick up the child. Our goal is to fully meet every child's needs!

### **No Idling Policy**

First Roots-Wild Roots is an Eco-Healthy Child Care certified program and we maintain this status in part by prohibiting the idling of vehicles in our driveway or parking lot. This applies to cars fitted with "remote start" features.

### **Parking, Speed Limit and Traffic Flow**

We have a ONE -WAY flow in our driveway from entry to exit. Please DO NOT use the exit as an entrance. The speed limit in our driveway is **10 MPH**. We have "train tracks" painted on the pavement to delineate the pathways for pedestrians. Pedestrians always have the right of way at our Preschool. Parking spaces by the playground are reserved for Handicapped Access (1 spot) and staff. The reason is so that during pick up time, fewer moving vehicles are entering or exiting this area which is so close to the Cricket and Chipmunk doors.

### **S.A.F.E. Policy**



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**Since pick-up and drop-off can be busy times, we ask for your understanding of and cooperation with the following "S.A.F.E." guidelines of our program:**

**S is for Sign In, Sign Out**—Upon arrival in the morning and afternoon, please make sure you have connected with your child's teacher and that they have signed your child in or out on the attendance sheet. Taking attendance daily is a mandatory requirement of the State of Vermont licensing and this policy applies whether children are inside or outside their classrooms.

**A is for Absent**—Please call or email us! Let the classroom teachers or the office know by 9:00AM if your child is going to be arriving late or not at all. We will be contacting you if we haven't heard from you and your child hasn't arrived as scheduled.

**F is for Find Your Child's Hand**—While we know that families like to spend time talking to each other at the end of the day, we ask that you supervise your child directly as soon as you pick them up by holding their hand and keeping them near you after they have been signed out in the classroom to avoid confusion and potential safety issues. It is especially important that you hold their hand in the parking lot.

**E is for Exiting Through Gates and Doors**—We ask that doors and gates be opened by grown-ups only. While this might seem like a good self help skill to encourage, children opening gates and doors in a school setting is never a safe practice. Please also make sure all doors and gates are closed behind you as you exit.

### **Communication**

First Roots-Wild Roots and the Treehouse can be reached by phone  
802-482-2525 (*extensions for each classroom to leave a confidential voicemail*)

Or by email to the following individuals:

Andrea Sambrook, Owner and Director, [andrea@bewilder-vt.com](mailto:andrea@bewilder-vt.com)

Andrew Sambrook, Owner, [sambrook@bewilder-vt.com](mailto:sambrook@bewilder-vt.com), or [billing@bewilder-vt.com](mailto:billing@bewilder-vt.com)

Bumblebees classroom: [bumblebees@firstroots-vt.com](mailto:bumblebees@firstroots-vt.com)

Caterpillars classroom: [caterpillars@firstroots-vt.com](mailto:caterpillars@firstroots-vt.com)

Crickets classroom: [crickets@firstroots-vt.com](mailto:crickets@firstroots-vt.com)

Beavers classroom: [beavers@firstroots-vt.com](mailto:beavers@firstroots-vt.com)

Foxes classroom: [foxes@wildroots-vt.com](mailto:foxes@wildroots-vt.com)

Chipmunks classroom: [chipmunks@wildroots-vt.com](mailto:chipmunks@wildroots-vt.com)

Catamounts classroom: [catamounts@wildroots-vt.com](mailto:catamounts@wildroots-vt.com)

Fireflies classroom: [fireflies@wildroots-vt.com](mailto:fireflies@wildroots-vt.com)

Treehouse After School classroom:

[fishercats@bewilder-vt.com](mailto:fishercats@bewilder-vt.com)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/bewilderVT](http://www.facebook.com/bewilderVT)

Website: [www.bewilder-vt.com](http://www.bewilder-vt.com)

Act 166 site: [www.vtpublicprek.info](http://www.vtpublicprek.info)