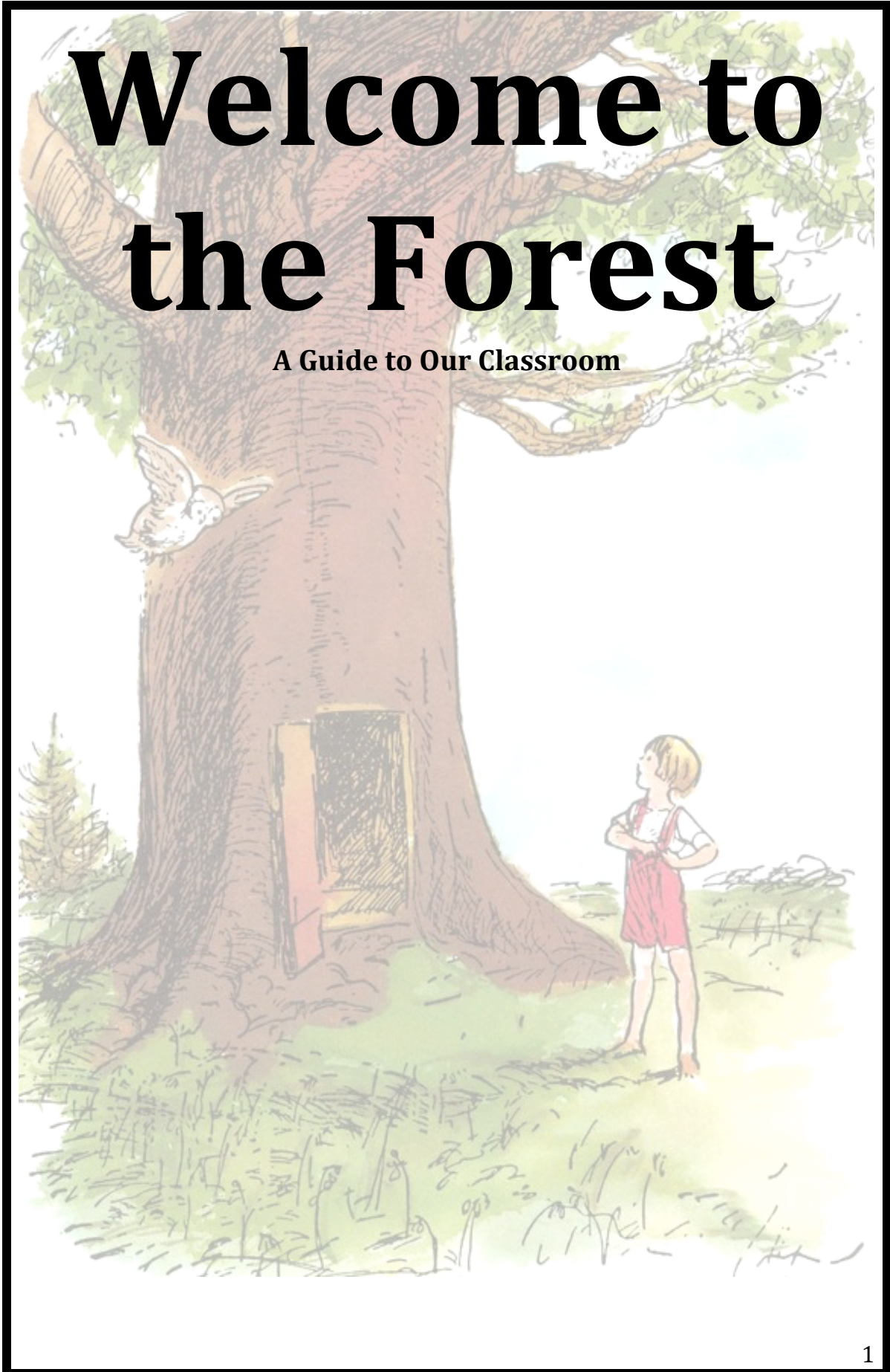


# Welcome to the Forest

A Guide to Our Classroom



To the Families and Children of the Forest Room,

Welcome!

Our classroom is designed for the best cognitive, emotional, social and physical growth of our students. In order for you to have a better understanding of what we do and *why* we do it, I have compiled this guide for you. Included within is a daily schedule, learning philosophy, teaching philosophy, and other information.

Please don't hesitate to ask me any questions. I want to work alongside all families and children in order to nurture the most effective growth.

# Forest Room Learning Philosophy

**Children are natural scientists, artists, and explorers.** We look to help children discover their strengths and natural curiosities in a safe, encouraging environment. Children's questions will be answered not only through words from their teachers but through the learning experiences teachers set up for them. Our goal is not only to teach your children, but to teach them how to learn. Curiosity is our best tool.

**Children are emotional.** They react to emotional stimuli for a reason. Teachers will encourage appropriate emotional reactions. Teachers will help children process emotions into a level of appropriateness and practice communicating the antecedent of the reaction.

**Children are social beings.** Our goal is for students to use positive communication habits with each other. This all starts with the teachers being down on the same level as the students when there is a social issue, and facilitating a conversation that will solve the problem. Both sides will be encouraged to explain their sides and their needs. Teachers will use open-ended questions to help children to creatively think of a solution. Each problem-solving conversation will end in the children having the option to hug each other, high five or fist bump.

**Children have a voice to use.** Teachers will always encourage children to explain their side of a story. Rather than saying "No! Don't do that!" to a child, teachers will explain to a child why a certain behavior is unsafe or inappropriate and ask the child why they behaved in a certain way. Teachers are there to help children brainstorm a different behavior or activity.

**Children can use their voice to protect themselves.** In addition, teachers encourage students to stand up for themselves with their words. When a peer makes unwanted physical contact, teachers encourage children to make their first message "Please give me space". If the contact continues, teachers encourage

students to use a serious voice and say “Do not touch my body”. This is encouraged because it teaches the children that saying ‘no’ the first time should be respected. Children get into the habit of knowing that their body is their own, and that other’s bodies must be respected as well.

Teaching children to use a serious tone can help their communication with peers and adults. They are able to see the positive effects of clear, serious communication rather than relying on yelling and hitting.

# Forest Room Teaching Philosophy

**Teachers are calm.** Within chaos, teachers must remain calm. Though teachers may use a serious tone, it is always under control and speaking directly at the child's level. By having a calm approach, the teachers set a precedent for student behavior.

**Teachers read the room.** Rather than demand subordination at all times, teachers will look at the energy level of the classroom as a whole. If the children are showing that they are too active to sit still for a circle time activity, teachers will transition into a facilitated movement activity. The goal is not to muffle the chaos, but rather to make it productive.

**Teachers are loving.** Teachers' tones, facial expressions and mannerisms will display to students' that they are fully accepted and celebrated as they are. Teachers understand that being three years old is difficult, and are empathetic to the struggles of their students.

**Teachers have fun.** The classroom will be full of laughter and chatter not only from the children...but the adults as well!

Lastly...**Teachers and families are a team.** We want the best for your children and thrive on your input and involvement!

# Forest Room Schedule



<b>7:30-9:00</b>	Free Play and Breakfast *Breakfast served 8:00-8:40
<b>9:00-9:15</b>	Greeting Circle and Introduction of Centers
<b>9:15-10:30</b>	Structured Learning Centers
<b>10:30-10:45</b>	AM Snack
<b>10:45-11:15</b>	Morning Circle
<b>11:15-12:00</b>	Outside or Gym Time
<b>12:00-12:30</b>	Lunch
<b>12:30-3:00</b>	Rest *Facilitated bathroom breaks and tooth brushing before resting on mat
<b>3:00-3:30</b>	PM Snack
<b>3:30-4:00</b>	Conclusion Circle
<b>4:00-4:30</b>	Free Play or Child's Choice Center
<b>4:45-5:30</b>	Gym, Outside or Continued Free Play *Teachers will use discretion when deciding whether or not to move into active play or allow imaginative and free play to continue.

# Schedule Descriptions

**Free Play.** Being able to observe student's independent work and interactions allows us as teachers to take note of interests and behavioral patterns of each student.

**Breakfast.** Starting the day off with a full belly means starting the day off with a full tank of energy! When our student's physical needs are met, they are able to learn more effectively. The Academy offers breakfast for the Forest Room from 8:00-8:40.

**Greeting Circle.** We are so glad that each one of our students is in our classroom. We celebrate this everyday by for each student by name.

**Introduction of Centers.** Discussion and display of structured learning centers prior to breaking up into small groups allows children to be more prepared for each planned activity.

**Structured Learning Centers.** We will have three structured centers each morning.

1. STEAM Center. One of our centers will be a multi-step project that is based on STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Art and Math) principles. In order for these projects to be effective, we will be continuing the center throughout the week in order to allow a full scope of exploration and learning. For example, if our theme for the week is ice we will continue science projects with ice to explore what we can do to create more ice. Furthermore, this can be branched out into other scientific explorations, such as asking, "what can we do to melt ice"?
2. Literacy and Math Center. Using different mediums ranging from sand to crayons to their moving bodies, children will learn basic math and pre-literacy skills. We will focus on one skill set and activity for the length of the

week. Repetition to this degree will help children master the skills required for literacy and math without frustrating or boring them.

3. Focused Play Center. Teachers will set aside specific activities available for children. Children will have a choice of sensory play, puzzle work, and book reading.

**Morning Circle.** Our structured morning circle will be where we discuss our theme of the week and our week-long projects. Discussions are open ended in order to help children keep asking questions and engage their sense of wonder. Teachers write down quotes and ideas in order to tailor curriculum and activities to the questions children have. The structure of our Morning Circle is as follows:

1. Yoga/Stretching
2. "Good Day" Song
3. Discussion of Theme
4. Song
5. Story

**Outside or Gym Time.** We will always aim to go outside. Fresh air and sunlight does wonders for student's energy levels, demeanor, and focus. However, we must factor in weather and temperature. If the outside conditions are inappropriate for students to be outside, we will play in the gym. We will occasionally consult students and ask them what their preference is. Depending upon the number of children and staff, we will try to split up our group to follow children's preferences.

**Lunch and Snacks.** Our students eat at least every 3 hours to help them keep their energy at a level that will keep them most productive. Families have an option of bringing a home meal or being provided lunches by The Academy. Meals and snacks are served by the teachers in the classroom, with fruit/veggie being served first. Children are asked to take at least a bite of their fruit/veggie before proceeding to a new food.



**Rest.** Copious amounts of learning and interactions in just a few hours calls for some rest! Teachers facilitate bathroom breaks, face washing, and tooth brushing before children lay on their mats.

**Conclusion Circle.** After a fun day of learning, playing and interacting with peers and teachers, we want to hear how our students feel about their day. We recap what our activities at school were today and ask each child what their favorite activity was. In addition, we do a “thumbs up or down” check in to ask children how they felt their day went. If a child says they had a ‘thumbs up day’ they are asked to describe their favorite activity at school. If a child says they had a ‘thumbs down day’ they are asked to explain why and how they are feeling. Afterwards, the teachers bring up positive points of that child’s day and let the child know how grateful they are to have them in the classroom.

**Child’s Choice Center.** Teachers will either have table work activities available, a STEAM activity or have a longer story time available for children who would like to participate. Children are free to decide if they would like to play or join the center.

**End of the Day.** We will complete our day outside, in the gym or in our classroom. The closing teacher will use their discretion and observations of the children’s behaviors and energy levels to decide where to go. If the children are successfully playing together in a harmonious manner, we will not interrupt their social growth by transitioning into the gym or outside. However, if they are starting to show signs of hyperactivity we will transition into a more suitable environment.

# Items to Bring to our Classroom

We have various items that are necessities in order to have a full and fun day at our school! Outerwear and Footwear is seasonal and weather dependent.

- Extra Clothing
  - Pants, Underwear, Socks, Shirt
- Bedding
  - Fitted Sheet, Stuffedies, Pillow, Blanket
- Footwear
  - Slippers
  - Boots and Sneakers
- Outdoor Gear
  - Jackets, Hats, Gloves, Snowpants
- Diapers (If needed)
- Any medication (Fill out form in order for teachers to administer)