

# Risk Management Policies & Procedures

## Forest School 2019

### Boundaries for Outdoor Classrooms

All Kaleidoscope Forest School sites will establish boundaries using visual aids to delineate the classroom space. These might include ribbons, sandwich boards, painted rocks/tree cookies, cones, flags, or other natural boundaries. Staff will create barriers between children's play space and any immediately adjacent hazardous features, such as a ravine, cliff, road, or body of water not intended for water activity.

Staff will teach students the boundaries intentionally and in a clear, developmentally appropriate ways, especially emphasizing these boundaries during the first month of school. This might include having the children paint rocks to add to the border, walking along the border, playing games where students stop their bodies at the edge, or other such activities.

### Climbing Policies

Climbing offers children an opportunity for careful planning, gross and fine motor development, risk taking, and more. The following are specific policies for tree climbing that must be followed:

- Staff will remove hazardous objects or mitigate hazards wherever possible from the surrounding area where children might fall, such as removing rocks or covering stumps with sharp edges.
- Children climbing in a tree should always have an adult within reach of the child.
- Adults may not help children into a tree. They may guide them verbally. A child must be able to get into the tree on their own.
- Children may not climb higher than the teacher's reach or twice the child's height (whichever distance is closest to the ground).
- Children may not have items in their hands while climbing.
- One child in a climbing tree at a time.
- Weather may impact climbing availabilities.

### Procedure for Going on a Hike

A “Hike” refers to any exploration outside of the designated learning environment or “classroom” space. Before each hike, teachers will secure and store any materials out (food, tools, supplies, etc).

Teachers will always bring the following:

- Sign- in sheet, completed
- EAP (emergency action plan)
- Health & safety forms
- First Aid Kit
- Safety whistle
- A phone

At the start of each hike, teachers will count the children and do a face- to- name check / roll call from the sign- in sheet.

During the “hike” teachers will:

- Conduct a head count every 10 minutes AND when stopping AND starting along the trail.
- Be within sight of each other for the count every 10 minutes.
- Be sure that teachers are within shouting distance of one another at all times. If teachers become separated visually, they must conduct a child count and shout out with the total number of students they have eyes on every 10 minutes.
- When appropriate, walkie talkies may be used for teacher communication.

After the “hike” teachers will count the children again and do a face- to- name check / roll call from the sign- in sheet.

## **Outdoor Clothing Policy**

Families are instructed to follow the clothing guidelines in the Kaleidoscope Family Handbook to minimize chances of illness and exposure to extreme weather. Staff will work with families who require assistance in meeting their children’s clothing needs.

Staff must remain aware of children’s verbal and non- verbal cues regarding their warmth and comfort and respond appropriately to ensure children’s health and safety. These responses may include, but are not limited to:

- Keeping children active and moving in cold weather;
- Resting in shaded areas to cool off; and
- Assisting children to remove or add layers of clothing, while supporting their development of self- regulation skills.

## Foraging & Poisonous Species Policy

Employees and students may forage known species. Students should be instructed to always ask before they pick and put something in their mouth, even if they have consumed it before. Instructors will ensure that foraging will not occur in areas that have had pesticides applied and from plants not contaminated from animal urine or feces.

Commonly foraged items that educators may invite children to eat include:

- Berries, including salmonberries, blackberries (various types), salal, oregon grape
- Leaves, including nettles (carefully harvested for tea), baby oregon grape, dandelion, miner's lettuce
- Cedar or douglas fir tips (for tea) will only be used occasionally because of their leaves are slightly medicinal.

Parents/guardians agree to foraging these items by signing the risk waiver or must let their child's teacher know if they do not want their child to consume any of the above.

To prevent consumption of unsafe plants or items in outdoor preschool, it is our policy that:

- Teachers will instruct children to always ask before they put something from nature in their mouths, even if they know what it is and have consumed it before.

## Use of Real Tools Policy

Children will have opportunities to use age appropriate, real, sharp tools. This may include manipulating real tools with careful adult supervision, including hammers/nails, hand saws, hand drills, carving knives and more.

To keep children safe, staff will:

- Offer preliminary opportunities for students to practice skills needed to stay safe while using tools (such as those to promote fine motor skills, using golf tees to hammer in to the ground, mindfulness of surroundings)
- Be within reach of students using tools, including but not limited to those listed above.
- Teach students tool safety, including staying in a designated area while using tools, pointing shovels/scissors/hammers downward toward the ground, wearing protective gear as appropriate, etc.
- An adult will always be present during the use of real tools.

## Stick Safety Policy

Students and staff are permitted to use sticks throughout the day. Staff will help students to work toward an understanding of safe stick use by using the following practices:

- Students will be reminded to notice the size of the stick they are using, using an arm measure test or height measure test.
- If the stick is longer than the student's arm and/or taller than the student, students will be asked to find open spaces away from other people to use or swing the stick safely, i.e. "Big sticks, big spaces."
- Students may use sticks that are longer than their arm for construction or other dramatic play tasks under close supervision of a staff member

## Campfire Activities Policy

Staff and students may participate in campfire activities within a designated fire structure designed for the express purpose of a fire. Campfires must be built according to safe fire practices, as provided by the U.S. Forest Service ( <https://smokeybear.com/en/prevention-how-to/campfire-safety> ) and with permission from the landowner or park's director.

Kaleidoscope will have signed written permission for campfire activities from each child's parent or guardian in the form of a risk waiver. Teachers must use developmentally appropriate teaching practices to ensure children understand safe behavior around a campfire, prior to any campfire activity.

Each class may have only one campfire activity at a time and must have a method of putting out a fire, such as a bucket of water or sand and must have a first aid kit nearby.

Staff must create a boundary around a campfire pit/structure, such as a line of sticks or log seating, that:

- Ensures children remain at least 3 feet away from the edge of the fire pit;
- Ensures adults are able to easily walk between the fire pit and children; and
- Remains clear of tripping hazards such as bags or other materials;
- If creating a seating area, make sure that chairs or seating logs have an emergency escape route between them.

A one-to-one (1:1) staff-to-child ratio must be met for any child engaging with the fire directly, such as by adding kindling or logs, and the staff member must remain within arms' reach of that child. Children wearing highly flammable clothing must not be allowed to attend the fire, and adults and children should be reminded to tie back long hair and secure loose clothing to reduce the risk of it catching fire.

While a campfire is burning and until after it is cool, staff must remain near enough to the fire to respond to any fire-tending needs and to prevent children from accessing the fire, if necessary.

Running and pushing must not be tolerated within 6 feet of the edge of the fire.

## **Water Activities Policy**

Some Forest School sites include exposure to bodies of water, in which children and teachers will occasionally explore. There will be no swimming activities at any time.

Before a child can participate in water activities, the teachers must obtain written permission via a signed risk waiver from the child's parent or guardian that allows the child to participate in such activities.

For all water activities where the water is more than twenty-four inches deep, or when children are within on quarter mile of an accessible body of water for than four inches deep:

- A certified lifeguard will be present and on duty. A staff member or volunteer counted in the ratio may be the certified lifeguard.
- At least one attending staff person present be able to swim, regardless of whether or not the children are engaging in a water activity.

Life-saving equipment will be kept readily accessible during water activities if a body of water is six feet or more in any direction and two feet or more in depth. Life-saving equipment may include a ring buoy and rope, a rescue tube, or a throwing line.

## **Parks Stranger Procedure**

Teachers will be prepared to interact with all sorts of visitors, most of whom are just curious about our program. Some members of the public may pose a threat to the classroom and can be managed with a polite conversation and reminders of the rules of public parks. Teachers are encouraged to maintain the boundaries of the classroom and safety of children.

Staff will relocate or contact Park Staff (if applicable) when concerns arise with which may include conversations with "strangers" regarding:

- Smoking nearby the classroom or children
- Littering
- Swearing
- Dogs off leash, dogs defecating in the classroom
- Excessive music or noise nearby the classroom

Other members of the public may endanger children. Teachers will call 911 if:

- You see a suspicious car parked or circling your class
- People are watching the children on a regular basis, for an uncomfortable amount of time

- People are intoxicated, belligerent, exposing themselves, etc.
- You are at all uncomfortable

## **Shared Public Space Policy**

As partners of YMCA Camp Orkila, Moran State Park, and the Eastsound Village Green park, Kaleidoscope Forest School acknowledges that its classrooms are public space. Kaleidoscope staff will not establish any permanent structures or changes without permission from the relevant park.

Staff must inspect the classroom and sites to be used throughout the day prior to children arriving and must address hazards (such as, but not limited to, loose branches, hazardous materials left in public spaces, or wildlife droppings).

## **Dogs & Pets Policy**

Students may not touch or interact with dogs while attending Forest School.

Families who bring their dog to drop off/pick up will be asked to leash their dog outside of the classroom area.

Teachers have the right to ask people to leash their dogs while around children.

Teachers will instruct students on “hiking etiquette,” requesting that they move to one side of the trail and wait for the dog to pass.

## **Wild Animal Encounters Policy**

While wild animal encounters are less frequent, teachers must follow policies regarding interacting with wild animals. These include:

Raccoons: Use the emergency whistle procedure to call the kids together, then move away from the area. Raccoon feces is toxic

Farm animals, such as horses, cows, goats, etc.: Children may only interact with these animals under close supervision of a farm member. Children should wash their hands with soap and water and/or hand sanitizer immediately after being in contact with any farm animals.

Predators, such as coyotes, cougars, foxes, bears: Blow the emergency whistle and keep the children close, then evacuate the area.

Stinging/Biting Insects: If a nest is found, teachers must contact the park/camp director.

Squirrels/Crows: Squirrels and crows are frequent visitors. Students may never touch these animals. To prevent squirrel/crow mischief, keep backpacks and any bags/containers containing food in a covered bin or locked shed.

Bats: Teachers or students should never touch live or dead bats. Parks/camp staff will be called, with bat- impacted area marked off by teaching staff. Teachers should sanitize any impacted areas.

Deer: Moving calmly and slowly, teachers and children will gather together away from the deer. If needed, teachers may make a loud sound to encourage the deer to retreat from the classroom.

Dead animals: Don't touch, or in special cases for learning purposes touch with one finger and then wash hands with soap and water immediately after.

## Missing Child Procedure

In the event that a child is missing or unaccounted for an immediate search is made and parents and authorities are notified at the appropriate stage.

Prevention Procedures:

- Head counts must be conducted every 10 minutes
- Children must stay within eyesight of a teacher at all times during the day

Students will be taught to:

- Hug a tree or other object when separated from the class. Hugging an object prevents children from wandering and increasing the search area.
- Respond orally when a teacher calls their name.
- Immediately go to the nearest teacher at the sound of 3 whistle blasts.

The following procedures will be followed in case of a missing child:

1) Determine that the child is missing from the setting.

2) Teacher #1 does a sweep of the immediate area, calling the child's name, checking under/ around hiding places.

Teacher #2 gathers remaining children together by blowing emergency whistle 3 times, counting them. Check the sign- in sheets to make sure that no other children are missing.

3) If the child is not found after the initial sweep, Teacher #1 does a more extended search, considering places in the park that the child is familiar with (ex: favorite trail, playground, parking lot, picnic shelter).

Note: At sites with water present nearby the classroom (Moran State Park), lifeguard teacher must IMMEDIATELY search the water area.

Teacher #2 keeps children calm, reading a story or singing a song.

4) After a thorough search (no more than 15 minutes), the following people must be contacted:

- The police (9- 1- 1)
- The Director. (The Director will contact the child's parents.)

In the event that the child is not found, staff will cooperate with police and the family to ensure best possible outcomes, including completing a comprehensive incident report.

## Extreme Weather

During times of extreme weather (hot or cold), staff will utilize a variety of strategies to ensure childrens' physical health and safety. Appropriate gear is a requirement for all children and changes seasonally. Staff will be trained in the signs of hypothermia, frost bite, cold discomfort, heat exhaustion, heat stroke and dehydration. Shelter will be used when necessary.

During extreme **cold** the following strategies will be utilized:

Limit time sitting still

Teacher directed physical activities

Campfires

Use rocks warmed by fire as a heat source

Hot meals and snacks provided/warm tea available

During extreme **heat** the following strategies will be utilized

Encourage drinking LOTS of water

Frozen "treats"

Water Activities

Shaded play

Frequent "rest" breaks



