

**FIDALGO**  
NATURE • SCHOOL

# **PRESCHOOL FAMILY HANDBOOK**

*2021-2022*

[www.fidalgonatureschool.com](http://www.fidalgonatureschool.com)

Updated September 1st, 2021

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# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

**Website:** [www.fidalgonatureschool.com](http://www.fidalgonatureschool.com)

**Tuition Payments:** <https://www.fidalgonatureschool.com/pay-tuition>

**Mailing Address:** 1004 Commercial Ave., PMB 245, Anacortes WA 98221

**Board of Directors Contact:** 254-632-8485; [fidalgonaatureschool@gmail.com](mailto:fidalgonaatureschool@gmail.com)

## 2021-2022 Locations and Programs

**Fidalgo Nature School Preschool (ages 3-6), MONDAY-WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM and TUESDAY-THURSDAY, 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM, MONDAY-TUESDAY-THURSDAY-FRIDAY, 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM**

### **Bowman Bay at Deception Pass State Park**

4399 Bowman Bay Rd. Anacortes WA. 98221

Bowman Bay is located on the south end of Fidalgo Island in Deception Pass State Park. To access the park, travel northbound or southbound on State Route 20, turning west on Rosario Road, which is just south of Pass Lake. After turning west onto Rosario Road, turn into the entrance to the park, approximately 100 yards west of State Route 20. Drive straight at the intersection to the campground parking lot.

## Board Members

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[board@fidalgonaatureschool.com](mailto:board@fidalgonaatureschool.com)

## 2021-2022 Academic Calendar

Our school generally follows the Anacortes School District academic year calendar. The first day of school is September 8, 2021. The last day of school is June 21, 2022. Holidays, breaks, and some of our school's private events are as follows:

- September 1 – Welcome Families Gathering/Family Orientation 5:30 pm via Zoom
- Sept. 6 – Labor Day
- September 8 – First day of school
- October 11 – Indigenous Peoples Day
- October 11-15 – Parent/teacher conferences (meetings held virtually)
- November 11 – Veterans Day (no school)
- November 25 – Thanksgiving (no school)
- November 26 – Native American Heritage Day (no school)
- December 20- 31 – Winter Break (no school)
- Dec. 21 – Annual FNS Luminary Solstice Walk at Bowman Bay (Deception Pass State Park)
- January 17 – Martin Luther King Day (no school)
- February 21 – President's Day (no school)
- March 7-11 – Parent/teacher conferences (meetings held virtually)
- April 4-8 – Spring Break (no school)
- May 30 – Memorial Day (no school)
- June 21 – Last day of school

# WELCOME

Welcome to Fidalgo Nature School preschool program. We currently offer an outdoor preschool program for 3-6 year old children at Deception Pass State Park in Anacortes, WA., with classes on Tuesday and Thursday, Monday-Wednesday-Friday, and Monday-Tuesday-Thursday-Friday from 9:00am - 1:00pm, with a 6:1 student to teacher ratio. Currently our program is license-exempt, but we consider Washington State's Outdoor Preschool Pilot Standards to develop our policy and procedures and will join the Washington State pilot program for outdoor preschool licensure during the 2021-2022 school year.

Our school is maintained by a team of volunteer board members and partners that jointly make decisions and help children in our community grow through play and self-driven, or emergent, (meaning emerging from the natural play time coming from each child's inquiry) education in the outdoor classroom. Our teaching staff typically includes an early childhood education specialist and an environmental education specialist. Our teachers have a combination of Early Childhood Education and Environmental Education experience and meet or exceed the requirements set by Washington State's Foundational Quality Standards for Early Learning Programs. They will also pursue continuing education each school year.

## Mission, Vision, Philosophy

### Our Mission

Fidalgo Nature School's mission is to strengthen the resilience of families in our community with outdoor schooling that is affordable and designed for all, and to foster in our students a lasting connection to Deception Pass State Park that inspires a lifelong sense of belonging in nature.

### Our Vision

We recognize children's connection to nature as a necessity of life. Direct experience with nature in a community of learners encourages compassion, respect and thoughtfulness. A sense of belonging in and to nature helps children make friends; play together with kindness; adapt to change while remaining true to themselves; and demonstrate a willingness to meet expectations for the greater good of the community.

### Our Philosophy

We believe children are intrinsically motivated to learn and can be capable co-facilitators of their learning. The natural classroom is an ideal environment in which to cultivate strong minds and bodies as well as social and emotional wellbeing. Being in relationship to the natural environment fosters a responsibility to a larger connection with the world and the beings who live in it. We are committed to creating a safe play space for children, fostering a love for the outdoors, and creating an equitable

environment. We are grateful to the Samish people upon whose land we live and operate our school, and we seek to incorporate their history, knowledge, and perspectives into our practices.

Fidalgo Nature School offers our families, teachers and community an opportunity to build a close and respectful relationship with the land we are learning from and on. We support intimate connection rather than control or domination of the natural environment. In our practice, it looks like this: encouraging children to see organisms as something to be observed and protected, rather than controlled. Modeling and talking about mutual respect by avoiding breaking leaves off branches, avoiding stepping on or smashing insects, and replacing rocks back where they were covering crabs on the beach. And learning to listen, sit with, and get curious about the natural environment around us.



# Our Approach

## Curriculum

At Fidalgo Nature School, we believe that play provides the rich experience through which children learn. Our school day programming includes a number of dynamic, exciting activities for kids: fishing in puddles with long sticks; climbing trees at the edge of the forest; building forts and nests with fallen branches; exploring new ways to use familiar art materials; cooperating with a partner to kick a ball back and forth in the open space; looking at picture books and telling each other their own stories; hauling huge pieces of driftwood to the water with friends, heaving them in and noticing which way the waves take them.

We feel that this play and inquiry-based model for education is central to high quality early childhood education. This kind of play that leads to learning:

- fosters curiosity
- teaches skills needed for other areas of learning
- creates a love of learning
- is self-chosen and directed by the child
- allows children to explore their own theories about how the world works, and
- is deeply engaging because it is interesting and meaningful to the child.

Fidalgo Nature School's curriculum, like emergent curriculum, begins with teachers reflecting on and formulating responses to observations of children's play. The observations include anecdotes, transcripts of dialogue, and examples of children's work.

As described by Susan Stacey in [Emergent Curriculum in Early Childhood Settings: From Theory to Practice](#), our curriculum is facilitated by teachers in collaboration with children and their families. The curriculum builds on children's current interests. Building on what children already know, teachers provide opportunities to discover more and dig deeper. The curriculum is lively and always developing rather than pre-planned. The learning process is documented in various ways to make the children's ideas and questions visible. Our teachers are given a regularly scheduled hour once a week to plan curriculum.

While our lessons rely heavily on play, questions, and conversations presented by students, some topics are presented purposefully to foster student growth, safety, respect and equity for each child in our care. Fidalgo Nature School is committed to a curriculum that reflects and respects the identities of the children, families, staff in the program, and fosters an interdependent connection to the natural world.

## Anti-Bias Education

Teachers will not ignore the biased behavior of children or adults. Teachers will intervene appropriately to stop children or adults' biased behavior by redirecting an inappropriate conversation or behavior and by responding to situations that may involve bias. The school refers to the work of Louise Derman Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards in [Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves](#) to address bias and integrate anti-bias education into our curriculum.

Our four main goals of anti-bias work with young children are as follows:

**Identity:** Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.

**Diversity:** Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.

**Justice:** Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.

**Action:** Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions.

## Child Guidance

An emergent curriculum depends on the quality of rapport teachers develop with children and their families. Our teachers are assigned to work with a consistent group of children to help build long term, trusting relationships.

Trust grows when teachers set clear and consistent expectations based on what they know about children's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development, on the abilities of individual children, and on their culture. Teachers use positive approaches to challenging behavior to help children make friends, feel successful and learn. They tailor the strategies they use to the situation and the children.

Among the strategies they use are:

- Planning to prevent problems and letting children know what events will happen next
- Modeling and teaching social skills such as taking turns, cooperation, waiting, impulse-control, respect for the rights of others, treating others kindly, and conflict resolution
- Involving children in defining simple, clear classroom limits
- Coaching children
- Offering choices
- Redirecting or helping a child change their focus to something appropriate to meet their needs
- Guiding children in solving problems

- Explaining to children the natural and logical consequence related to the child's behavior in a reasonable and developmentally appropriate manner
- Asking the other students to support each other in agreed upon guidelines, boundaries or general help with physical skills like unbuttoning backpacks, closing water bottles, collecting magnifying glasses, taking turns, etc.

Fidalgo Nature School forbids the use of physical punishment or restraint. Unless a teacher is protecting a child from serious injury, physical restraint is not used without a written plan that includes input from the child's primary care or mental health provider, and the parents or guardians. Physical restraint is only used by teachers trained to do so.

## **Administration and Staff Hiring**

In hiring or recruiting volunteers, we value, encourage, and advertise for diverse experiences and hire those that are professional, thoughtful, and mindful collaborators who have a personal connection with nature, enjoy being outside in all seasons and excel at sharing in the joys of childhood. We look for candidates who can demonstrate many styles and models of learning and can utilize multiple teaching philosophies.

## **Behavior Interventions and Withdrawal**

We want to see every student succeed and will support your child in the classroom as described in “Child Guidance” above. When the child’s behavior presents a serious safety concern for that child or others and the school is not able to reduce or eliminate the safety concern through reasonable modifications, a caregiver will be contacted and asked to work with teachers and the director to create a behavioral support plan. If there are continued behavioral or safety concerns, the preschool teachers and board directors will meet to create a plan, and help identify additional resources and additional support in the community.

Behavior that presents a serious safety concern includes:

- Inability to adjust to the program after 30 days of enrollment
- Uncontrollable tantrums or angry outbursts that are not within the common scope of that child’s stage of development
- Ongoing physical or verbal abuse
- Excessive biting

Plans and intervention efforts by the school may include a behavioral support plan, an assessment from a behavioral specialist, enlisting the help of classroom volunteers, and daily/weekly check-ins with child/parent. If no plan implemented in the outdoor school setting is addressing the child’s issue at hand, the lead teacher will meet with the parent(s) to discuss further intervention requirements. School staff will present options for the family to choose from, such as early pick-up when requested or a caregiver accompanying the child at school. Families may then choose among the further intervention options

based on what will work best for their child and their family. The school may require a caregiver to accompany the child at school until the necessary changes to behavior have been met. In the rare circumstance that a caregiver's presence is unable to mitigate serious safety concerns, the school will give the family one week's notice to withdraw the child from school for a set period of time, inform the family of the minimum duration for withdrawal and list the expected changes in behavior required for the child to return to school.

## **Mandated Reporting**

Fidalgo Nature School's staff and governing board have a duty to protect children. The school will report suspected or known incidents of physical, emotional or sexual abuse; and neglect, maltreatment or exploitation of a child to Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families.

## **Non-discrimination**

Fidalgo Nature School welcomes all children, families, and employees, without discrimination based on one's race, creed, ethnicity, national origin, sex, honorably discharged veteran or military status, marital status, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, or ability. The school recognizes and honors the history of the land that sustains it and the Indigenous people who have long resided here. We are committed to providing an early learning environment that reflects the strengths of every child, family and community, and our interconnectedness to the land we learn upon.

## **Enrollment**

### **Applying**

Visit <https://www.fidalgonatureschool.com/enroll> to fill out enrollment forms for your child. This page will direct you to the Procure website, where you will fill in student/guardian information and sign waivers and releases electronically.

We will confirm our receipt of your enrollment packet by email. Your child will either be offered a spot in the class or be placed on the waitlist. When a spot opens up for your child, we will contact you by email and phone. We wait 24 hours to hear back from each family before offering the spot to the next family. You may complete an enrollment packet for your younger child if that child will turn three within the 2021-2022 school year. Your child will automatically be placed on the waitlist. We preferentially offer spots as they open to siblings of children already attending FNS and may take certain other factors into account when determining how to offer placements, such as gender and age balance in the class as well as availability of funding for low-cost/free tuition.

### **Enrollment and Disenrollment**

We begin enrollment in spring with a two-week priority enrollment period for families of current and waitlisted students. Public enrollment for the 2021-2022 school year will begin on April 15, 2021.

We ask that you provide two weeks' written notice of your intention to withdraw your child from school. This courtesy gives us time to fill the vacancy left by your child, which allows us to refund two weeks' tuition from your prepaid last months' tuition deposit. If you do not provide two weeks' written notice, your prepaid tuition deposit will cover the time it takes us to fill the vacancy and will not be refunded.

## **Tuition**

Our 2021/2022 tuition rates are calculated for the entire school year and divided into 10 equal monthly payments. Monthly tuition is as follows:

- 2-day program (T/TH): \$286 per month
- 3-day program (M/W/F): \$428 per month
- 4-day program (M/T/TH/F): \$571 per month

Tuition will be invoiced monthly through Procure, with your first invoice arriving on Aug 1st. Payments are due on the 15th each month, with the first due date Aug 15th and the last due date May 15th. Electronic payment is preferred, and auto-pay is available. Credit card payments will be subject to a service fee of 2.6%. ACH transfers are no additional fee. If you are unable to access the Procure website for tuition payments, please contact [treasurer@fidalgonatureschool.com](mailto:treasurer@fidalgonatureschool.com) for other options.

If your family is having difficulty making a tuition payment, please contact [treasurer@fidalgonatureschool.com](mailto:treasurer@fidalgonatureschool.com) before your payment is late so that we can find a solution together that does not interrupt your child's school experience. We work hard to find options for families such as short-term scholarships and flexible payment plans.

## **Termination of Services**

The school may terminate enrollment due to:

- Failure to complete enrollment forms
- Unpaid tuition
- Repeatedly late drop-off or pick-up (without prior consent at the discretion of the teachers)
- Inappropriate or unsafe behavior in or near the school

## **Your Child's Record**

The forms you fill out for enrollment make up your child's record. This complete record will be stored confidentially online, where it will be accessible only to you, our staff, and our board of directors.

Teachers carry with them, and never leave unattended, the following information:

- emergency contacts
- health information, including allergies, and consent to treat medical or dental emergencies
- child pick-up authorizations

You will be asked to update your child's record annually. Please complete this important task, because having current information helps us keep your child safe. The records will be kept for three years.

# COMMUNICATION

## Family to School Communication

Procedures and phone numbers for emergency and non-emergency communication will be shared with you via email, Procure, and print-out on the first day of school. Please save these numbers to your phone!

We encourage that sensitive conversations with the teachers be held outside of drop-off and pick-up time, as there will be other families waiting to make the drop off or pick up. There is also the risk of speaking about your child or other children without having privacy, and we want to be sure to honor everyone's right to privacy when speaking about any children or family at the school. Therefore, we encourage you to reach out to [educationdirector@fidalgonatureschool.com](mailto:educationdirector@fidalgonatureschool.com) should you want to make a time to talk with the teachers.

You will have a parent/teacher conference after the first month of school to check in, hear how your child is doing, ask questions, etc. If you or the teacher feel an individualized care plan might help your child, this would be introduced here. This will be done via Zoom or by phone, at your and the teachers' discretion. There will also be another parent/teacher conference set in the spring but do feel free at any time to reach out if you feel the need! You may schedule additional parent/teacher conferences at any time.

## School to Family Communication

Day-to-day communication takes place as described above under the heading ***Family to School Communication***. Teachers will use the Procure site to post photos, stories, and schedule events such as conferences. We will reach out via email to send announcements as well.

## Parent-Teacher Conflict Resolution

What do you do when you have a conflict or concern with one of the teachers or the class? When a conflict with a teacher arises, our preference is that you discuss it first and only with the teacher involved to seek a resolution. If you are not comfortable going to the teacher, or are unable to come to a resolution, you may reach out to a board member at [board@fidalgonatureschool.com](mailto:board@fidalgonatureschool.com) to mediate. If you are still not in agreement, you may file a written complaint with the Fidalgo Nature School Board of Directors for a decision, at [board@fidalgonatureschool.com](mailto:board@fidalgonatureschool.com) or by mail at our address. After a review of the complaint and the school's policies and procedures, the board will make a final recommendation within 15 days. You have the right to withdraw your complaint at any time.

## Photography, and Videography

Fidalgo Nature School staff may intermittently use phones to take photos and short videos of students during class. We share these photos with families via Procure. In order to protect the privacy of all our students, we ask that you refrain from sharing these images on personal social media pages unless only your child is depicted, or unless you have explicit permission from the families of any other children pictured.

With families' consent, our staff and board use photos/videos from the classroom on the Fidalgo Nature School website, advertisements, community education and Facebook/Instagram. We never publish student names. Each student's enrollment paperwork includes a section expressing their family's wishes with regards to images of their child.

## ATTENDANCE

### Gradual entry

A two-day gradual entry to our program is optional for all new students and is intended to ease children attending preschool for the first time into the routine of regular attendance.

Gradual entry begins with an hour-long visit with you and your child to meet the teachers and experience the school environment and for you to ask questions. You will be encouraged to step back and observe as your child becomes familiar with a new routine, teachers and friends.

The next time, your child will attend for an hour without you. Your child's teacher will guide you and your child through the drop-off routine then give you an opportunity to say goodbye. Reassure your child that you will return shortly. For example, tell your child that you will be back after snack time. Children feel more confident saying goodbye if you prepare them for what to expect before you leave for school.

After this gradual introduction to school, most children are ready to try a four-hour day. Because every family and every child is unique, you may want to try a more gradual entry. If you have any concerns or questions as gradual entry progresses, your child's teacher will be happy to provide support.

### Drop-off and Pick-up

***Please refer to our separate covid protocols as they change frequently.***

We use daily attendance records to account for children and establish responsibility for their care. An adult who is listed on your pick-up authorization form must sign your child in and out of class each day. At the end of class, we will not release your child to any adult who is not listed on your pick-up authorization form.

We ask that you drop off your child at school by 9:00am. Late drop-offs make it difficult for your child to join in a program already in progress. If you are more than 10 minutes late in the morning, we ask that you either make alternate arrangements by text to meet up with the class while it's in session. Prepare your child to enter the program space quietly and with minimal disruption.

Please pick your child up from school at 1:00pm. If you are unable to get to school by 1:15pm, we will begin calling the people authorized to pick up your child. Our teachers are scheduled to work until 1:15 pm and arriving late may interfere with their ability to leave work on time. If you are chronically late we will schedule a conference to find a solution that will work for our school and your family.

The teachers always appreciate notification by text when you are unable to get to school on time.

The below map indicates drop-off/pick-up parking and class site. Class "home base" changes throughout the year (for example, when the campground is closed and group sites become available to us, or during poor weather) and changes will be communicated to you by the teachers. You may park in the parking lot for up to 15 min without a Discover Pass. If you plan to stay for longer, please remember to display your Discover Pass (free ones are available for check-out from the Anacortes Library).



## What to Bring

Your child will need to bring a backpack small enough for your child to carry comfortably that can also hold a snack, a lunch, a bottle of water, and extra clothes. Each child should bring a change of clothes, including pants, tops, underwear or diapers and extra socks. Please identify your child's backpack with your child's name and a separate bag with extra clothes with his/her/their name.

If your child is learning to use the toilet and wearing pull-ups or diapers, please pack one large Ziploc bag with a container of wipes and at least two diapers or pull-ups. Please label the Ziploc bags, diapers or pull-ups, and container of wipes with your child's name.

## Healthy, Hearty Meals

Please pack a snack, lunch, and water for your child every day they come to school. We encourage you to bring a variety of food items including fruit and/or vegetables and calorie-rich foods such as sandwiches, wraps, pasta, yogurt, or cheese and crackers. In the winter, some children enjoy a thermos full of hot lunch, tea, or cider to help feel warmer. Meals from home that do not meet the USDA CACFP requirements may be supplemented with additional food items provided by the school.

The following resources may be helpful as you plan healthy, balanced meals with your child:

USDA's meal serving standards for childcare centers

[https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cacfp/CACFP\\_MealBP.pdf](https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cacfp/CACFP_MealBP.pdf)

Bastyr Healthy Plate infographic

[https://bastyrcenter.org/sites/default/files/bcnh\\_healthy\\_plate\\_infographic\\_v1.pdf](https://bastyrcenter.org/sites/default/files/bcnh_healthy_plate_infographic_v1.pdf)

CACFP-compliant cold lunch menus from Connecticut State Dept of Education

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/MealPattern/menulunchcoldCACFP.pdf>

## Dress for Success

In warm weather, students wear closed-toe shoes, long pants and sleeves, and a hat with a brim. This prevents scratches, insect bites, and sunburn. Please apply sunscreen to your child's exposed skin before class. Fidalgo Nature School provides SPF 50 sunscreen for staff to re-apply as needed throughout the day to the exposed skin of children whose families consent.

In wet weather, students wear waterproof boots with one-piece rain suits or both a raincoat and rain pants. This allows them to comfortably stomp in puddles, change into dry clothes, use the toilet, or have a diaper or pull-up changed. **In the wet season, please pack a raincoat and waterproof pants even when rain is not in the forecast.**

In cold weather, students wear layers. We suggest a wool or polypropylene base layer next to the skin. We do not recommend cotton because it is absorbent and can feel damp. Fleece sweatpants and sweatshirts make good second layers. Wool, fleece, or down sweaters or jackets that fit under raincoats provide a third warming layer. Your child will also need wool socks, a warm hat, and mittens.



## Family Engagement

Parents and guardians have permission to access the preschool program areas during all business hours. We encourage parents and guardians to visit their child's class while it is in session. You might like to come for lunch, read the group a story, join us on a field trip, or just spend some time with your child.

There is a daily rhythm to each four-hour session:

- 20 minutes of free play and craft time as we welcome children
- 15- to 30-minute opening circle and story
- toileting, handwashing, and snack
- class adventure to the shore or forest
- toileting, handwashing, and lunch
- 15 minute closing circle

The school collaborates with families to plan a variety of events like potlucks, experts and storytellers who visit the classroom to lead special activities, etc. Our main event is a luminary walk on the darkest day of the year, the winter solstice. The school may offer occasional question and answer sessions on topics of interest to parents like guidance and discipline, kindergarten transition, nature topics, etc.

## **Celebrating Cultural Identity**

We value our differences and uniqueness and would like to get to know your child and family better. In order to protect your child's right to develop to the fullest, we encourage your family to participate in the life of the school. ***We hope you will feel comfortable helping us celebrate those aspects of your cultural identity and life that make you proud. We envision a community where children and their families form meaningful connections, practice respect, and stay curious.*** At the beginning of the school year, the school will send a survey to families to inquire about any cultural practices or other traditions, skills, and talents they may want to share with our class over the year.

Any seasonal celebrations planned by school staff will focus on celebrating and appreciating the changes in the natural world as we move through the year, such as our winter solstice celebration of light. Our celebrations will minimize the commercial aspects of holidays and will not promote any specific religious or cultural tradition. Instead, children and families will be encouraged to share their own traditions with our group. Children may simply want to share stories about traditions and holidays they are excited about, and families are encouraged to contact the teachers with any ideas about how to share their traditions with our school community.

## **Off-Site Trips**

On several occasions throughout the year, we may take trips to alternate locations such as spending a day at Rosario Head for tidepool exploration. Fidalgo Nature School will not provide transportation to alternate sites but will communicate with parents and guardians at least one week in advance to coordinate drop-off and pick up at the field trip site. We will also remind families one day before our trip and send clear directions about where our class will be headed for the day.

# **SAFETY**

## **Risk Management Policies**

Our risk management policies are based on risk-benefit assessments that take into account the potential benefits of risky or challenging play as well as the potential consequences. These policies are meant to balance safety with growth opportunities that are a part of taking risks. A copy of risk-benefit assessments will be kept on-site and can be accessed by families upon request. Each family will be asked to sign a waiver acknowledging they have read and agreed to the risk management policies.

### **Risky Play**

The school accepts that risk-taking can be a necessary support to healthy child development. Teachers consider the potential for injury when helping a child recognize and evaluate a challenge and decide on a course of action. During activities such as climbing or tidepooling which involve heightened risk, teachers supervise students more closely and use questioning and scaffolding to help children determine risks and ways to mitigate it. Staff encourage children to accept their current levels of ability as they work towards goals.

## **Encountering Pets and Wildlife**

Part of the wonder of attending a nature preschool is the opportunity to see wildlife in a natural environment. When we notice a wild animal, we observe quietly without approaching.

Teachers check the school grounds daily before class for animal droppings and work to prevent children from handling animal waste. Surfaces soiled by animal waste are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Should children encounter animal waste, they will wash their hands and change their clothing.

Because our classes take place in a public park, we may encounter off-leash dogs. As with encounters with wildlife, we stand very still and do not approach. Staff will report encounters with off-leash dogs to park management.

## **Supervision**

Only authorized staff, the child's own caregivers, and emergency responders will have unsupervised access to children when they are in care. We maintain a low child to teacher ratio (6:1) and establish firm boundaries to allow children to play safely under the supervision of an authorized staff member. All children will remain actively supervised by at least one staff member at all times.

## **Location and Interaction with the Public**

Deception Pass State Park at Bowman Bay was chosen as our site for its wide variety of ecosystems and playscapes, freedom from known environmental hazards, and accessibility to utilities and emergency services. Students are dropped off and picked up each day at "home base," which is at the upper parking lot at Bowman Bay. The class travels on foot from home base throughout the day to explore forests, beaches, and meadows within the park. Families provide personal transportation to and supervision of their own children during off-site activities.

Because we operate in a public park, some degree of contact between the public and our classes is inevitable. Teachers provide active supervision and prevent any member of the public from having unsupervised access to students. If an individual behaves in a threatening or inappropriate way, teachers move students to safety and immediately alert park staff and/or the Anacortes Police Department.

## **Campfire Activities**

On some occasions over the year, we offer campfires as a way to stay warm, practice fire safety, learn about the science of energy, and enjoy storytelling! The following policies will be enforced to establish safe campfire behavior:

- keep bucket of water, shovel, and first-aid kit with fire blanket and sterile non-adhesive bandages nearby
- delineate 3-foot boundary in which one adult always stays and only one child may enter at a time
- fires must be in a fire pit and no more than 2 feet in diameter
- ensure children understand safe fire behavior before campfire activity
- allow children to assist in developmentally appropriate ways

## **Water activities**

Children can play near the shore only if a teacher is actively supervising. Children are not allowed to be at the shore or play near the water if a teacher is not present. Children are never allowed to submerge their feet in the water. If they want some water for a project, they may ask a teacher to help them get it. If they wish to wash their hands in the water, they may ask a teacher for assistance.

## **Use of Public Facilities**

We will use public restroom facilities while on-site at Bowman Bay. During the winter months we will be the only group using the restrooms on a regular basis, but during spring and fall these restrooms serve the Bowman Bay Campground as well. We may encounter members of the public when using restrooms, so children will **always** be supervised when inside the bathroom to prevent any interaction between the children and other park users in the restroom facility. A teacher must check the restroom before a child goes inside to assess whether it is safe to enter. Children will use restrooms when no other park visitors are present unless their toilet needs are urgent.

## **Climbing Natural Features**

When climbing more than 30 inches above the ground, a staff member must provide active supervision and be able to reach the child's midriff. Supervising staff members will watch climbers closely for any signs of uneasiness, instability, fear, and anything that may cause a safety issue. We will encourage children to assess risk for themselves and learn about their own capabilities, so teachers will not lift children up to a height they cannot climb to on their own. We will coach them on how to plan ahead to climb up and down on their own, stepping in if necessary.

## **Wild Foraging and Poisonous Species**

At Fidalgo Nature School, children must only consume wild plants that have been picked with instructor supervision for the purpose of consumption, and properly cleaned and/or prepared. Children at this age do not have strong discernment skills yet to safely identify edible plants so they must check with an instructor before consuming any plants. Mushrooms can be difficult to identify, even for experts, so we will never consume mushrooms at school. Some plants we may encounter at Bowman Bay are poisonous if touched or ingested, such as poison oak or cow parsnip. Staff will take care to visually identify poisonous plants before allowing children to play in new areas. Play area boundaries will not contain any plants that can cause a poisonous reaction when touched. Plants such as stinging nettle and blackberry, which can be unpleasant but generally not dangerous, may be encountered and included within boundaries.

## **Sharp Tool Use**

At this time, we are not allowing the use of sharp tools such as saws, knives, or arrows at Fidalgo Nature School. However, sticks may be used as tools in a variety of ways. As a class community, we will create guidelines around stick play, including the following:

- Sticks longer than a child's arm must always point down to the ground.
- Sticks are never allowed to be used to touch someone with.
- The children are not allowed to run with sticks in hand.
- **Gun play with sticks will be heavily monitored by teachers.** Teachers should be aware that our students come from a variety of backgrounds and may have exposure to guns through family hunting and fishing traditions. If teachers feel that it is getting violent or is directed at other students, they will help students redirect their play.
- Teachers and staff may also offer alternate use of sticks and imaginary play with them such as fishing poles, wands, walking sticks, drawing tools in mud/sand, drumsticks etc.
- Sticks may be thrown and waved around after the teacher helps the child to assess their surroundings and see no person near them who could get hit by the stick.

## Physical Contact Play

Play involving physical contact is natural and an important type of play for many children. Physical play helps children learn self-regulation, set boundaries with others, and it provides peak experiences of intense, high energy play. To make sure physical play is safe we will carefully monitor it and set intentional boundaries of the types of physical play allowed at school. In order for physical interpersonal play to occur, it must:

- be consensual for all children involved
- occur in soft, grassy areas away from dangerous obstacles
- not involve wrestling
- not involve sticks or other hard, sharp objects
- not involve pulling or tugging on clothing
- be gentle enough that all children and teachers are comfortable with the play

## Self-Regulation

Children will be encouraged to monitor their own temperature and hunger levels throughout the day. Taking responsibility for their own self-care helps children to become aware of their body and its needs and to plan for both their present and future comfort.

Staff will enforce the following policies to make sure children are meeting their own needs:

- All members of the class **must** wear a waterproof raincoat when it is raining.
- All members of the class must choose at least one food item to eat at snack time and at lunch.

Teachers will check in with students if they appear hot, cold, or are not eating, encourage them to listen to their body, and give ideas of how to take care of their needs.

## Practicing Personal Power

Children of preschool age practice using their own **personal power** with their peers. Starting at FNS, the children may be practicing around peers for the first time. We approach the classroom with the expectation that children will, at times, use their personal power to push, hit, grab, insult, or manipulate

others. These behaviors tend to decline as children get older and build social and regulatory skills, but in a preschool class, children are still in the early stages of learning about appropriate treatment of others. Therefore, we expect that this type of behavior will happen regularly. ***We invite you to join us in seeing these moments of conflict as a valuable learning opportunity for every person in our class community.***

Encountering others who are treating them unkindly is an opportunity for children to develop their own personal power, as well. We coach children through the process of stating their feelings and needs, and setting boundaries with others. Our goal is for children to follow two steps: first, tell the other child what they feel and want, and if the other child doesn't acknowledge their needs, they should then let a teacher know so we can step in to make sure the other child is listening to their boundaries. If the other child continues to violate boundaries, the interaction will be stopped by the teacher. We believe it is an important skill to be able to communicate personal boundaries to other people, so we use interpersonal conflict between classmates as a chance to practice and build a strong foundation for the inevitable future conflicts every child will encounter throughout life.

Our approach is based on the theories of **restorative justice** and **functional behavior analysis**. Functional behavior means that all behaviors have a purpose – they are the ways children try to get their needs met, but children may not yet know how to express this need clearly or even how to identify it themselves. If we can identify and meet their needs another way, the undesirable behavior will stop. It also encourages us to separate the child from their behavior. Children who exhibit these behaviors still have the same need as other children to feel accepted, cared for, and valued by the class community, so it is important for us to separate our idea of the child from the undesired behavior.

We have also adapted some principles of restorative justice as goals for our approach to conflict. We do not always expect to reach these goals when we are reacting in the moment but we will use them to reflect on and inform our approach. Restorative justice:

- Focuses on how to resolve 'wrongdoing' by integrating both parties involved (the hurter and the hurted), back into the community. Before we can bring a child who has hurt another into acceptance and caring from the community, we must acknowledge the harm, attempt to repair it, and hold them accountable for future actions.
- Avoids isolating the child, or labeling them as a "bad guy" or "bully", as doing so undermines both the natural stage of development around personal power, and building a level of comfort and belonging that can allow them to grow and change their behavior.
- Holds children accountable for their actions while accepting them for who they are right now without blame or shame. Blame says, "you did this; it was bad." Accountability says, "You did this; now you need to do something else to make it better."
- Focuses on repairing the harm that was done versus a more traditional punitive approach. This means that victims are the focus, and their needs are addressed first. Our first step might be comforting the child who was harmed, then asking: What do they need to feel better? We might provide suggestions, such as asking for an apology, having the other child sit further away, or a commitment to future behavior change.

- Encourages learning to accept and have compassion for a child who shows difficult behaviors. A child may need the support and encouragement of their community to improve their behavior; we encourage children that are not being directly harmed to be support systems for those who are, *and* for the child who caused the harm.

Behavior does not happen in a vacuum, and we acknowledge that the structure of our class and the dynamics of our community are contributing to any unwanted behavior. Therefore, it is the responsibility of us teachers to look critically at the child's environment to see if we can make any changes to support behavior change. Strategies include:

- developing strong teacher-child relationships with children who are having a hard time connecting;
- providing opportunities to feel seen and heard, like sharing family photos, giving appreciations to each member of the class, and acting out stories children tell;
- modifying our schedule or how we navigate transitions;
- splitting into smaller groups during class time; and
- identifying acceptable alternatives that meet the child's need they are trying to communicate.

We intend to communicate openly about conflicts happening in our class with parents and families. If we are concerned that your child is consistently the victim or perpetrator of harmful behaviours, we will reach out to plan strategies together to improve the situation. A teacher will let parents know in writing or in a private conference about conflicts affecting their child, so as to protect the privacy of children and families in these conversations. We also encourage parents to reach out if you are concerned that your child is being treated unkindly by another student. It is helpful for us to know so we can monitor particular interactions more closely, and support your child in letting us know what they need.

Children may also look to their parents to help them debrief and reflect on harmful behavior at home once out of the emotionally charged moment. Even if they reached a resolution with the other child at school, it feels good to be heard and comforted by a parent. If your child comes home and wants to tell you about how someone hurt them, it can be helpful to ask them:

- How did you feel when that happened? How do you feel about it now?
- What did you do?
- What did the teachers/other kids do?
- What can you do next time something like that happens? Help them think of strategies like saying no, talking to a teacher, or finding other friends to play with.
- Help your child identify their own boundaries and expectations for interactions with other children.
- Engage your child in wondering what the aggressor might be feeling or trying to communicate. This reframing can help us avoid the blame cycle and instead help us come together to develop compassion and empathy.

We appreciate your support of our whole community approach to this aspect of preschool development as we strive to build a compassionate, cooperative, growth oriented classroom.

## Missing Child Protocols

At the beginning of the day the person signing students in will write down the number of students in attendance that day on the sign in sheet and make sure all staff are aware. This number will be updated if students are picked up early. Head counts of the students should be performed at least every 15 minutes. If a student is missing, one teacher will gather the class and perform a face-to-name check. If the check still doesn't match what is on our attendance list, we will see which child is missing and one teacher will notify a park ranger immediately.

The Lead Teacher will nominate another teacher or volunteer, if available, to thoroughly search the immediate vicinity of the last place the child was seen. If after 5 minutes of searching, the child is still missing, the director will inform the police followed by the child's parent/caregiver. Park staff will be notified as well to help with the search. While waiting for the police and the parent/caregiver to arrive, searches for the child will continue. During this period, other staff members will maintain as normal a routine as is possible for the rest of the children.

## Injuries

When a minor injury occurs, you will receive a written report that includes the date and description of the child's incident or injury; the treatment provided to the child while in care; and the names of the outdoor preschool program staff providing the treatment. You and the teacher will both sign the form to acknowledge that you received it, and a copy will be filed in the child's record.

In the case of serious injury teachers will, with your written consent to seek medical care and treatment, call 9-1-1 first, and then your emergency contact number(s). Teachers will provide first aid until help arrives. If your child must be transported to a medical facility, a staff member will accompany your child until a parent or guardian arrives.

## Emergency Procedures

### School-to-Parent Emergency Communication

Bowman Bay has notable challenges with cell service and connectivity. As a mitigation, our teachers carry a radio to ensure direct communication with park staff and law enforcement. Our teachers also carry a cell phone with a Google Fi plan, which has good service at the site. During an emergency:

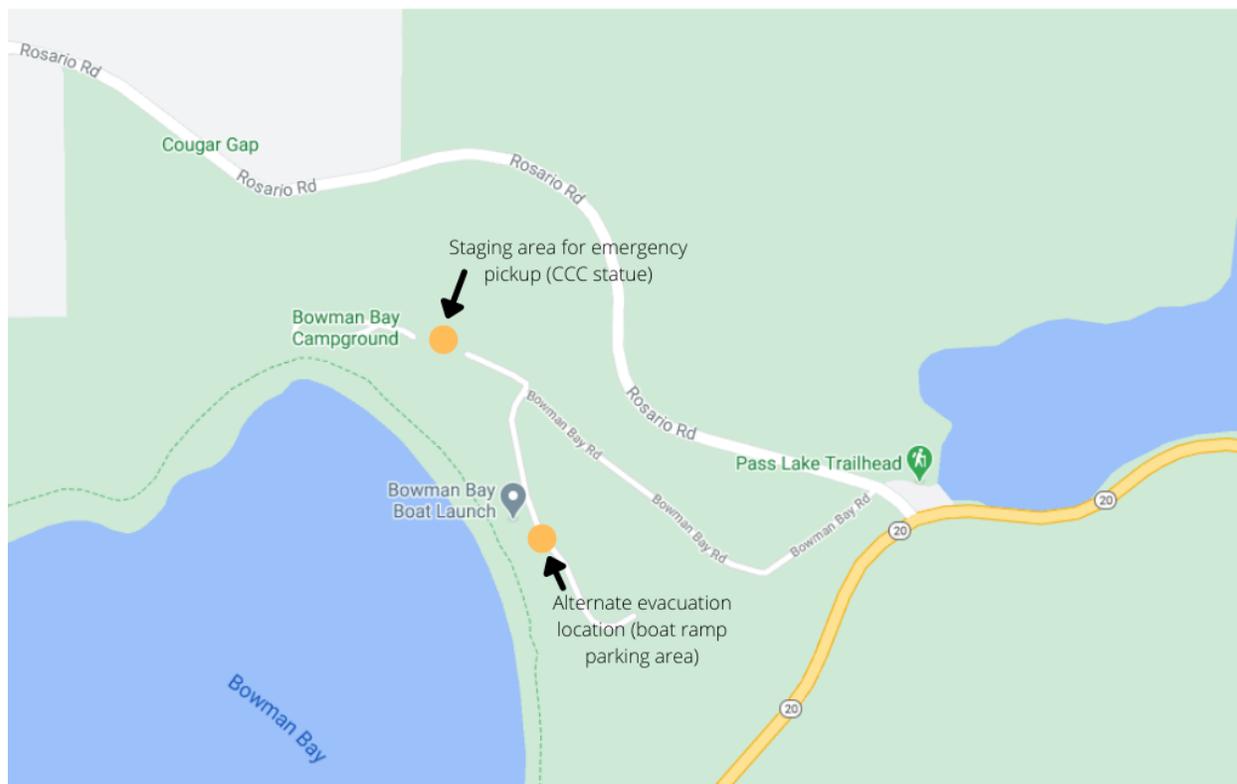
1. Teachers will use park radio to stay in contact with park staff and request assistance with communicating with students' emergency contacts if necessary. Park staff maintain a current roster of students and family emergency contacts.
2. If able, teachers will call students' emergency contacts on the classroom phone.

## Parent-to-School Emergency Communication:

Communication instructions and phone numbers will be shared with you on the first day of class, via print-out at drop-off, email, and Procure message.

## Evacuation Sites

In case of emergency, and depending on the nature of emergency, teachers will evacuate students to a safe site. In the case of any park emergency, or immediate need for parents to pick up children in the park, the staging area will be the large grass field located in the center of the parking lot identified by a Civilian Conservation Corps statue. This is a flat level area with limited exposure and readily identifiable. The alternate location is the south Bowman Bay parking lot.



## First Aid Supplies

Fidalgo Nature School adheres to the outdoor preschool pilot standards for stocking our first aid kits. It does not include EpiPens, or other medications, so if you feel your child needs one, do let us know.

## Inclement Weather Plan

School may close due to inclement weather. While we have a shelter for the children if there is a windstorm that comes in, for instance, we also use the Anacortes School district's decision to close school out of concern for the safety of families driving to and from Bowman Bay. If the school district

closes for reasons other than inclement weather, we will make the choice to stay open at our own discretion.

Weather conditions that will prompt the school to close include:

- National Weather Service high wind warning, sustained high winds over 25 mph, or wind gusts over 35 mph;
- Cold temperatures below 20 degrees Fahrenheit;
- Heat above 90 degrees Fahrenheit;
- Air quality index of 100 or higher;
- A 50% chance or greater of lightning storms during school hours;
- Tornado watch or warning;
- Hurricane watch or warning;
- Flood watch or warning
- Tsunami/seiche advisory or warning

You will be notified by text message no later than 8:00 am on the morning of class in the case of a school closure. If the weather becomes unsafe during class, we will text you so you may pick up your child early.

## **Disaster Plans**

Fidalgo Nature School has prepared written disaster preparedness plans for fire, floods, lockdown, earthquakes, and extreme weather. These plans can be reviewed in our Emergency Preparedness Plan, which is provided in a separate document.

## **Liability Insurance**

Fidalgo Nature school carries a \$2,000,000 aggregate liability insurance, underwritten by the Scottsdale Insurance Company.

# **STAYING HEALTHY**

## **Hygiene Practices and Handwashing**

We help wash students' hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds under running water. Children, youth, and adults should wash hands right before leaving home. Hand washing or using hand gel should also be done before leaving to go home. Practice hand washing as a family to help young children make sure they are doing it correctly.

When soap and water are not readily available, we use an alcohol-based hand gel with at least 60% alcohol and preferably fragrance-free but we hand wash with soap and water when hands are dirty, after diapering or toileting, or before eating.

We ask you to practice covering coughs or sneezes with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash, as we practice this protocol at school. Clean hands with soap and water or hand gel.

When hands are visibly dirty, we don't use sanitizer and wash hands instead.

## **Laundering Practices**

Our hand towels and spare clothing will be washed after every use at school. As we do not have a washing machine on-site, we are relying on the community of staff and families to handle our laundry needs so we can use reusable towels and clothing. Staff and/or family volunteers will be responsible for washing laundry according to the following specifications:

Dirty or soiled laundry must be:

- kept separate from clean laundry,
- cleaned with laundry soap or detergent,
- rinsed,
- sanitized with bleach or sanitizer recognized by the EPA, or sanitized by using a washing machine or dryer that reaches at least 140 degrees fahrenheit.

If you are helping out with laundry we appreciate it so much! Please make sure you're able to follow these guidelines to help us comply with licensing requirements.

## **Illness**

Our teachers check for signs of illness when children arrive at school and throughout the day. A child who appears ill will be sent home if:

- The illness or condition prevents the child from participating in normal activities
- The illness or condition requires more care and attention than the teachers can give
- The required amount of care compromises the health and safety of other children
- There is a risk that the child's illness will spread to others

We ask you to keep children home if they have:

- A temperature above 100°F
- Vomited 2 or more times in the past 24 hours
- Diarrhea where stool frequency exceeds two stools above normal in the past 24 hours
- A rash not associated with heat, diapering, or an allergic reaction
- Open sores or wounds discharging bodily fluids that cannot be adequately covered
- Untreated lice, ringworm, or scabies

Any child who appears severely ill, is lethargic, cries persistently, has difficulty breathing, has a temperature of 100 or higher, or whose behavior or activity level has changed should not attend class.

Fidalgo Nature School must provide written notice to Skagit County Public Health and the families of the enrolled children within 24 hours of learning that an enrolled child, staff member, volunteer or household member has been diagnosed by a healthcare professional with a contagious disease.

## **Medication**

Teachers cannot administer any prescription or non-prescription medication to a child without the school's Medication Authorization form completed and signed by the child's parent or guardian. Please ask a teacher for a form when you need one.

## **Toileting and Diapering**

Teachers offer children the opportunity to use the toilet and wash their hands afterwards in park facilities twice during each 4-hour session. Children may also request to use the bathroom at any point during the day. The bathrooms are checked for cleanliness and safety prior to the children's use and the toilet seats, sinks, or other surfaces that children touch will be cleaned with disinfectant wipes when required, which is prior to each visit to the bathroom, currently.

Because we do not have the facilities to lie children down to change diapers or pull-ups, diapers and pull-ups will be changed from a standing position in the bathroom at the park facilities. We refer to the guidelines for changing soiled diapers and clothing in the American Academy of Pediatrics' [National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs](#) publication.

## **Sanitizing and Disinfecting**

Fidalgo Nature School will follow DCYF licensing standards for sanitizing bathrooms, washable surfaces, and laundry. This includes sanitizing bathroom surfaces and high-touch areas daily. We sanitize any toys or learning tools that are shared between classes before being used by the next class.

## **Prohibited Substances**

Fidalgo Nature School prohibits smoking, vaping or similar activities, the consumption or influence of alcohol, cannabis, and illegal drugs in the presence of children.

Because our classes take place in a public space, teachers may need to move children away from situations in which these prohibited activities are taking place and to prevent them from gaining access to the listed prohibited substances.

*Welcome to Fidalgo Nature School!*

