



FIDALGO
NATURE • SCHOOL

PRESCHOOL FAMILY HANDBOOK

2024-2025

www.fidalgonatureschool.com

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Contact Information

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Public phone number: 360-375-3809

Classroom phone number: 360-853-0665

Lead Teacher/ Program Director email: luanne@fidalgonatureschool.com

Board of Directors email: board@fidalgonatureschool.com

Park main office phone number: 360-675-3767

Board of Directors

Molly Harrigan, *Executive Director* (she/hers)

molly@fidalgonatureschool.com

Rana Alcocer, *Chair* (she/her)

board@fidalgonatureschool.com

Jacynda Wheeler, *Treasurer*

treasurer@fidalgonatureschool.com

Tisha Marosi, *Secretary* (she/hers)

board@fidalgonatureschool.com

Krystle Taniguchi, *Past Chair* (she/hers)

Chelsea Harmon (she/her)

Kevin Cussen (he/him)

Madelyn Robertson (she/her)

Leilani Gregg (she/her)

Whitney Keith (she/her)

Advisory Board

Jason Armstrong, *State Parks Representative* (he/his)

Anastasia Brencick, *Founding Member/Past Chair* (she/hers)

Kat Kimber-Yonkman, Past Treasurer (she/hers)

2024-2025 School Calendar

- Aug 22 from 8 – 8:45pm *ONLINE* Welcome **Parents** Orientation with Lead Teacher & Executive Director
- Aug 29 from 3-4pm- Welcome Families Orientation at Bowman Bay
- Sept. 2– Labor Day (no school)
- Sept 3- no school
- September 4– First day of school (Bowman Bay)
- October 14 – Indigenous Peoples’ Day (observed in class)
- October 21-24– Parent/teacher conferences (meetings held virtually/over phone)
- November 11– Veterans Day (no school)
- November 28– Thanksgiving (no school)
- November 29– Native American Heritage Day (no school)
- Dec 2- classroom moves to Cornet Bay Retreat Center
- December 16-31- Winter Break (no school)
- January 1 – New Year holiday (no school)
- Jan 2- no school
- January 3- Winter session starts
- January 20– Martin Luther King Jr. Day (no school)
- February 17 – Presidents Day (no school)
- March 3 @ 8am- 25/26 class registration: current students and waitlisted families
- March 10 @ 8am- 25/26 class registration: new families
- March 17- classroom moves to Bowman Bay
- Mar 31– April 4- Spring Break (no school)
- April 21-24- Parent/teacher conferences (meetings held virtually/over phone)
- May 26 – Memorial Day (no school)
- June 17 – Last day of school

Directions to Preschool

Fidalgo Nature School (FNS) is fortunate to use two classroom locations at Deception Pass State Park during the school year. We are at Bowman Bay, except in the winter months, when we move to Cornet Bay Retreat Center. We do this so that we have access to great winter hiking trails and indoor space when absolutely needed.

Dates: September 4- November 27, 2024 and March 17- June 17, 2025

Location: Deception Pass State Park @ Bowman Bay, 4399 Bowman Bay Rd. Anacortes WA. 98221

Directions: 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. A State Park Discovery Pass is required if you choose to enjoy the park while your child is at school.

Dates: December 2, 2024- March 14, 2025

Location: Deception Pass State Park @ Cornet Bay Retreat Center, 400 Cornet Bay Rd, Oak Harbor, WA

Directions: Cornet Bay Retreat Center is approximately 8 minutes south of Bowman Bay and is located south of the Deception Pass bridge, on Cornet Bay Rd.. From State Route 20, turn east on Cornet Bay Rd. Continue ½ mile to the classroom destination. Look for the Cornet Bay Retreat Center sign on the left hand side of the road. Travel down to the first parking lot and park. We'll be there to greet you!

Hours of Operation

Monday through Friday, 9:30a- 1:30p

WELCOME

Welcome to Fidalgo Nature School! We offer a licensed outdoor preschool program for 3-6 year old children, located inside Deception Pass State Park at Bowman Bay. We occupy part of the ancestral lands of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the Samish and Swinomish. We see this, respecting Indigenous Nations' rights to sovereignty and self-determination in today's world. Fidalgo Nature School is committed to lifting Indigenous voices and to being respectful listeners and active learners in our relationships with Tribal governments, staff, and citizens.

This beautiful area includes a wide variety of ecosystems and playscapes, and the State Park infrastructure provides accessibility to utilities, shelters, and emergency services. Students are dropped off and picked up each day at "home base," which shifts based on time of year and the campground

being open. The class travels on foot from home base throughout the day to explore forests, beaches, and meadows within the park.

Mission, Vision, Philosophy

Our Mission

To provide quality, accessible, nature- based education for children in the local community, fostering their sense of belonging in the natural world and a lifelong connection with the outdoors.

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

At FNS we believe that play-based, child-led education held outside in a rich natural setting nurtures curiosity, providing students the ultimate opportunity for learning, including and beyond academics. In allowing children the opportunity to play outside when they are young, we believe we are better positioning them to reap a multitude of developmental benefits for years to come.

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.

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 nature 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

Meet the Team

Our teachers have a combination of Early Childhood Education, Forest and Nature School Education and Environmental Education experience. All staff meet or exceed the requirements set by Washington State's Outdoor Nature-Based Child Care Touchstone Standards. We also support staff to continue their education through various professional resources.

Our school is managed by a team of volunteer board members, partners and an executive director that jointly make decisions and help children in our community grow through naturally occurring play and self-driven, or emergent, education in the outdoor classroom.

In hiring or recruiting volunteers and staff, 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.

Curriculum

At Fidalgo Nature School, we believe that play provides rich experiences through which children naturally learn as capable co-facilitators in their process. 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.

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 regularly scheduled time each 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.

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.

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 child to create a behavioral support plan. The executive director is available to help at any time and can identify resources and support in the community.

Behavior that presents a serious safety concern includes, but is not limited to:

- Inability to adjust to the program after the child, family, staff and board have not found a collaborative solution.
- Uncontrollable tantrums or angry outbursts that are not within the common scope of that child’s stage of development
- Ongoing physical or verbal abuse
- Biting self or others

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 of one's ability, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious, cultural or spiritual beliefs, marital status, gender identity, sexual orientation, age or honorably discharged veteran or military status. 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 electronically complete student/guardian information and sign waivers and releases. Please also include a headshot photo of your child, which remains confidential. Guardians can also call or email to request paper copies of the forms to complete.

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 48 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 current school year. This 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 one-week priority enrollment period for families of current students. Enrollment during this early period confirms that we will hold a spot for your child, but does not mean you will receive your top choice of scheduling. Public enrollment begins the week after priority enrollment.

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 may not be refunded based on the circumstances.

Tuition

If tuition is financially prohibitive for your family, please fill out an enrollment packet anyway! We aim to offer reduced or even free tuition for families who need it. There will be space to share the tuition you can afford on the enrollment form, and we will be in touch with options. We are working hard to make our classes available to everyone.

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

- 4 days/wk- Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs from 9:30a-1:30p (\$737/mo)
- 3 days/wk- Mon, Wed, Fri from 9:30a-1:30p (\$553/mo)
- 2 days/wk- Tues, Thurs from 9:30a-1:30p (\$369/mo)
- 1 day/wk- Fri from 9:30a-1:30p (\$184/mo)

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 and ACH transfers do not have additional fees. If you are unable to access the Procure website for tuition payments, please contact molly@fidalgonaatureschool.com for other options.

If your family is having difficulty making a tuition payment, please contact molly@fidalgonaatureschool.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)
- Inappropriate or unsafe behavior by any member of the family in or near the school

Late Pick-Up Policy

FNS does its best to create space for unforeseen late pick-ups as well as help staff focus on their responsibilities after school has ended for the day. This policy was created to balance both sides of the equation.

The first two times are free, and recorded. Staff will clearly communicate with parents/guardians in each instance, so that both parties are on the same page.

At time #3 and thereafter, it's \$10 for every 15 minutes that a family is late. This covers a little less than the administrative expense of having two staff supervising the student instead of doing closing tasks, or staying late if beyond the normal staff release time of 2pm.

The executive director is responsible for creating the invoice and communicating with the family to solve the problem.

Also, medical reasons or family emergencies do not apply. However, if these types of situations continually occur (because there's a sick family member for example), then the executive director works with the family to designate a new pick up person.

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 executive board members . 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 as well as any time your child experiences these changes. Please complete this important task, because having current information helps us keep your child safe. The records will be safely stored for three years.

COMMUNICATION

Family and School Communication

Procedures and phone numbers for emergency and non-emergency communication will be shared with you via email through Procure, and print-out on the first day of school. Please save these numbers to your phone, especially the school's cell phone number listed at the top of this document.

The lead teacher will use the Procure site to send an email home each Friday. This email includes photos from the week, stories, and upcoming events. Having this information may help families extend learning and connection beyond the classroom!

We require that conversations regarding conflicts or your child and other children's behavior 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. Also, we honor the right to privacy when speaking about any children or family. Please reach out to the lead teacher should you want to make time to talk with them. They are often available to talk the same day or following morning.

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

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 constructively 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 the executive director at molly@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 or by postal mail. After a review of the complaint and the school's policies and procedures, the board will make a final recommendation within 10 business 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 and 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, ask questions and experience the school environment with other students present. You will be encouraged to step back and observe as your child becomes familiar with a new routine, teachers and friends.

The second 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 4-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

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 at the class time listed. Staff are responsible for morning tasks before that time and are not able to accept early drop-offs. Late drop-offs interrupt the flow of programs already in progress. If you are more than 15 minutes late in the morning, we ask that you text the classroom phone. Prepare your child to enter the program space quietly and with minimal disruption. If your child needs to arrive late or be picked up early, please make arrangements with teachers in advance.

Please pick your child up from school at the class time listed. If you are unable to get to school within 15 minutes after class, we will begin calling the people authorized to pick up your child. Our teachers are scheduled to work until a certain time each day 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. Bowman Bay 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!

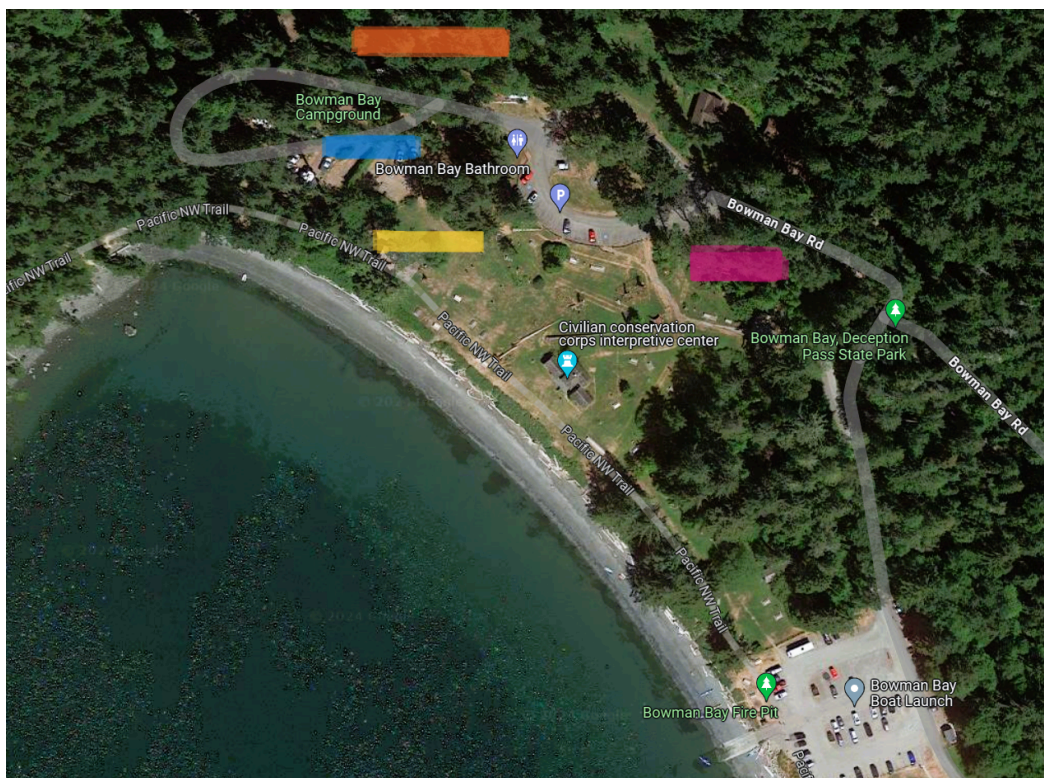
Below you will find a visual map of Bowman Bay parking and class sites. We rotate through the seasons for a varied experience and for the land to get rest.

pink- September 2024, then April through June 2025

yellow- this is a shelter used during inclement weather from October through December 2024

orange- this is an optional site that currently doesn't have dates applied to it.

blue-This site will only be used Oct through Dec 2024 if Cornet Bay is unexpectedly unavailable.



Below you will find a visual map of Cornet Bay Retreat Center. Please park in the lot , shown with the green icon. The pink box is where we meet, in front of the building.



What to Bring

Your child will need to bring a backpack small enough for them 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, please pack one large Ziploc bag with a container of wipes and at least two pull-ups. Please label the Ziploc bags, pull-ups, and container of wipes with your child's name.

Healthy, Hearty Meals

Please pack a snack, lunch, and water for your child each day. 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. There are no microwaves onsite.

As a licensed childcare facility, we are required to serve food options that align with the USDA CACFP requirements. A CACFP-compliant lunch for ages 3-5 must offer:

- ¼ cup fluid milk
- 1 ounce of meat, poultry or fish; 1/4 cup cooked beans; 1 egg; 1 tablespoon of peanut butter; ¾ cup yogurt; or 1/2 ounce of nuts or seeds
- ¼ cup vegetables
- ¼ cup fruit
- 1 oz grains - 1 slice bread or ½ cup rice/pasta

Meals from home that do not meet the USDA CACFP requirements may be supplemented with additional food items provided by the school. Please provide a lunch and snack for your child that includes all of the CACFP requirements listed above. If providing milk and keeping it cold would be a difficulty for you, FNS offers powdered milk during lunch that can be prepared for your child.

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

USDA's lunch serving standards for childcare centers

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/child-adult-lunchsuppertable-edited-030722.pdf>

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

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/MealPattern/Menu_CACFP_Lunch_Supper_Cold.pdf

More CACFP-compliant lunch ideas:

<https://www.connectingkidstomeals.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/January-2020-Cold-Meal-Packed-Lunch.pdf>

Meal plans for toddlers with photos - these meals have about as much food as most kids need to bring, and meets CACFP requirements other than milk:

<https://pinecones-and-pacifiers.com/toddler-daycare-lunch-ideas/>

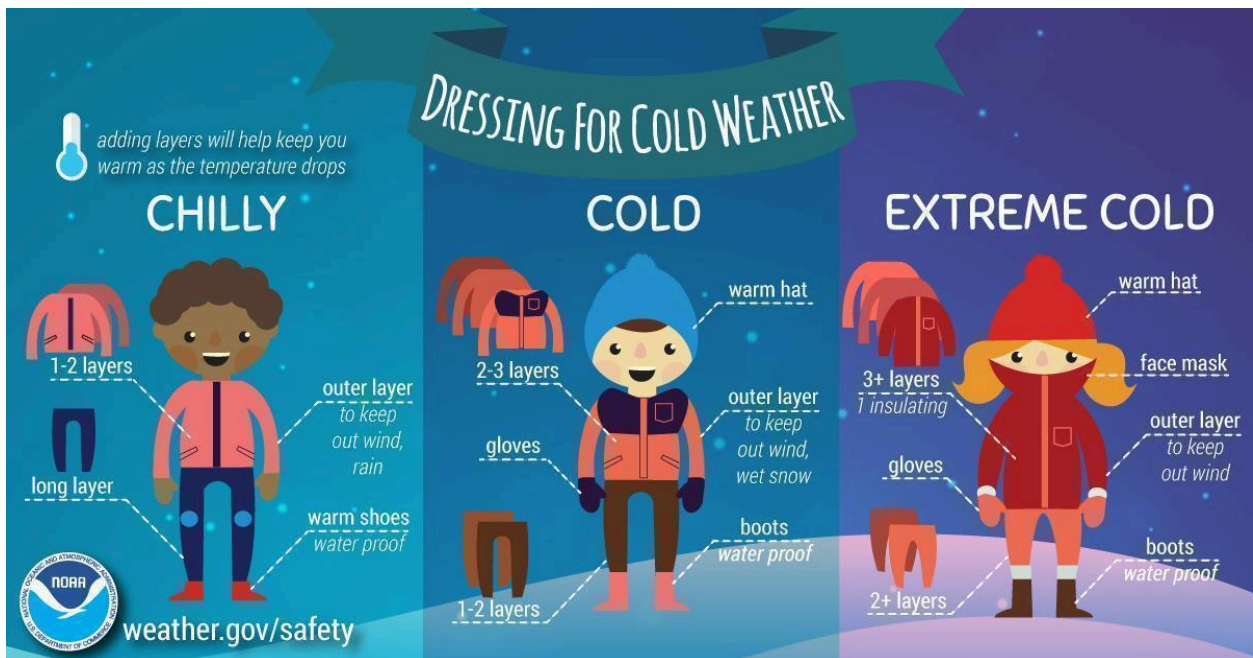
Dress for Success

Please contact the teachers if your child needs support for any of the following items. We can likely provide protection for the whole school year!

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 pull-up changed. **Please always pack a raincoat and consider having your child start the day wearing waterproof pants even when rain is not in the forecast. The grass is often wet and there are very often puddles and mud at our class site.**

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 does not insulate when wet. 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. It is important to bring several pairs of knit gloves or mittens as they get wet and soiled quickly during motor tasks requiring manipulation. Water resistant/proof gloves/mittens are useful when object manipulation is not required. Additional pairs of socks were also recommended. The preschool has extra sets of everything if needed. Just let us know!



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. It can be helpful to communicate with teachers beforehand. 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 such as potlucks or occasional 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 are important to your family. We envision a community where children and their families form meaningful connections, practice respect, and stay curious.*** At the beginning of the school year, staff will 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. 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.

SAFETY

Please refer to our separate public health protocols as they change frequently.

Risk Management Policies

Fidalgo Nature School applies Washington State’s Outdoor Nature-Based Childcare Standards to our policies and procedures. 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

Fidalgo Nature 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 tide pooling 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. Even with calculated risk taking, small scratches and scrapes are a common side effect to nature play.

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.

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 waste and work to prevent children from handling unsafe material. Surfaces soiled by animal waste are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Should children encounter animal waste, they will wash their hands and change any soiled clothing.

Because our classes take place in a public park, we may encounter members of the public with dogs. We do not allow students to pet dogs at school, even if invited by the owner. If families bring dogs to drop-off or pick-up, please keep them outside the class boundaries as much as possible. Parents who have signed out their children from school may allow interaction with other families' dogs. Sometimes we encounter an off-leash dog in the park. 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 FNS care. We maintain a low child to teacher ratio (16:3) 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.

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:

- Staff will be trained in fire building and extinguishing techniques before fire activities occur
- FNS will maintain a record of safe fire making practices used during fire activities
- 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, including no running or pushing within 6 feet of a campfire
- allow children to assist in developmentally appropriate ways

Water Activities

Deception Pass water stays cold all year and is only around 50 degrees Fahrenheit in summer. Children are allowed to be at the shore or play near the water when a teacher is supervising. Children are allowed to submerge their feet in the water, up to ankle depth.

Barefoot/ Outdoor Footwear Activities

We believe it is important that children have the opportunity to spend time outside barefoot should they choose and it is safe to do so. Some of the benefits received from this may include: strengthening the feet and body, developing a sense of body awareness or proprioception (which has been shown to lead to improved balance and jumping skills later on), as well as a healthy, natural gait to name only a few. More details can be found [here](#).

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 by an approved staff member 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.

Children will not be permitted to play with electrical outlets or their coverings and will always be actively supervised when using spaces near electricity - in the bathrooms, picnic shelters, and campsites with electrical outlets. Electrical outlets will be excluded from the play boundary whenever possible.

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, scaffolding these skills in if needed.

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 yet have strong discernment skills 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

We incorporate the use of sharp tools into our Programs, such as saws and knives at Fidalgo Nature School under the guidance of a trained head teacher. Use of tools, such as whittling can support children in a plethora of ways including with patience, self-regulation, focus and fine-motor skill development. Children will receive educational instruction around basic knife-skills, safety, and proper whittling techniques from their head teacher. Before using a knife, children must have attended an instruction and safety course by the head teacher, and made sure they chose a safe location away from the group. Children are instructed to draw a 'safety circle' around them using their arm extended out to define a boundary. Under the supervision of a teacher, if the circle is clear from people and objects, then the child is safe to practice whittling within the 'safety circle.' Children are not allowed to bring knives from home, unless approved ahead of time with the teacher and parents.

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. ***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 they 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.

One of our approaches is based on the theory of **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 principles of **restorative justice** for our approach to conflict resolution. Staff do their best to utilize this approach when responding in the moment and when reflecting on the occurrence afterward. 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 teacher’s responsibility to look critically at the child’s environment to learn where supportive adjustments can be made. Strategies include:

- developing strong teacher-child relationships, especially 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 behaviors, 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

Each morning 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 to identify who is missing. Teachers will ask students if they have seen their friend. If there is no additional information, one teacher will notify a park ranger immediately. Emergency services will be provided by park rangers or

additional emergency personnel if the park service determines the need for additional support. The executive director will also contact the child's primary caregiver(s) at this time.

While waiting for park staff and/or police to arrive, 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 and check any hazardous areas near the location (bathrooms, parking lot, roads, steep hills, ocean waterfront, etc.). The searching teacher will use their emergency whistle to alert a child who may be hiding. During this period, other staff members will maintain as normal a routine as is possible for the rest of the children.

A child missing from care must be reported to DCYF within 24 hours.

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. The executive director and board are notified that same day.

Emergency Procedures

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 that has good service at the site.

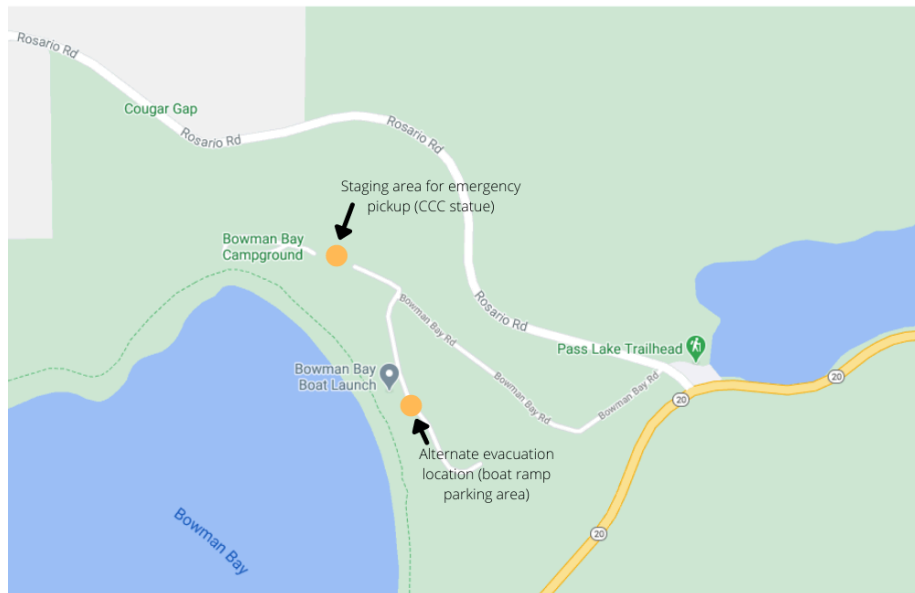
During an emergency:

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.

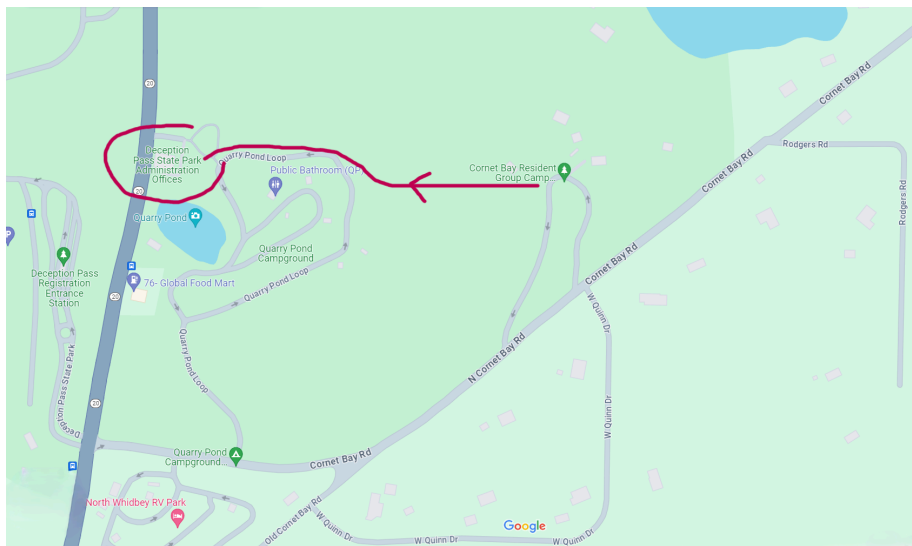
Evacuation Sites

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 Bowman Bay 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.



When class is held at Cornet Bay Retreat Center, the evacuation site will be at the Park Main Office, 41020 State Route 20, Oak Harbor 98277.



First Aid Supplies

Fidalgo Nature School adheres to the outdoor preschool 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 ASAP!

Updated: July 2024 by Molly Harrigan & Luanne Ferrell. Approved by Executive Board

Inclement Weather Plan

School may be canceled, start late or close early due to inclement weather. We have a permanent shelter at both sites for the children when needed. We use both the Anacortes and Oak Harbor School district decisions to close school out of concern for the safety of families driving to and from our classroom sites. 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 as soon as possible 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. We can call you if you don't use text messaging on your phone. Let your teachers know at the start of the school year.

Disaster Plans

Fidalgo Nature School has disaster preparedness plans for fire, dangerous wildlife, 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 Nonprofits Insurance Alliance.

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.

We hand wash with soap and water when hands are dirty, after diapering or toileting, or before eating. When soap and water are not readily available, we use an alcohol-based hand gel with at least 60% alcohol and preferably fragrance-free. When hands are visibly dirty, students wash hands with soap and water instead of using sanitizer whenever possible.

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.

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 reuse 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.

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.

Please take a Covid-19 test if your child or anyone in your family has symptoms or has been exposed.

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 talk with your child's teacher to complete the process.

Toileting and Diapering

Teachers offer children the opportunity to use the toilet and wash their hands 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 cleaned by FNS staff daily prior to the children's use, and the toilet seats, sinks, or other surfaces that children touch will be cleaned whenever visibly dirty throughout the day.

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.

Our staff are required to supervise students while in the bathroom. They are also available to assist students on an individual level. Our teachers are expected to provide assistance according to the directions of the child's family. We also want to increase self-help skills. We want to ensure that expectations at home are consistent with expectations at school to eliminate any confusion. Assistance will include the following tasks:

- o Assistance with Clothing
- o Assistance with Diapering
- o Assistance with Wiping only when absolutely necessary. It's important for students to practice first.
- o Assistance with Hand Washing

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 Behavior

FNS staff and board strive to demonstrate positive, healthy and safe behavior for each other and the students.

We prohibit smoking, vaping or similar activities, the consumption of or being under the influence of alcohol, cannabis, or illegal drugs in the presence of children.

Because FNS 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 behavior.

Advertisements or companies named on clothing must be positive, healthy and safe for student viewing. Clothing must fully cover body parts that may make others feel uncomfortable or overly curious.

Thank you for trusting Fidalgo Nature School with
your child!

We are very excited to co-create positive
memories with your family!

