

Introduction

Dear students and families,

Welcome to our school! Edson Forest School is an independent, non-denominational, nature-centered school that is committed to the development of its students across the intellectual, creative, social, emotional, and physical spectra. Our ideal is that every student will realize his or her full potential through full engagement in our learning community. We expect every student to bring his or her best self to our school, ready to embrace the opportunity that our unique program provides. Our students will strive to grow not only their own potential but also that of their peers, working together in an atmosphere of mutual trust and shared responsibility. We aim to inspire in every one of our students a capacity for critical thinking, an ability to express their creativity, a sense of belonging in their community, a respect for the ideas and feelings of others, and a lifelong love of learning.

This school is an embodiment of the dream of its founders, Eric and Janeth McKee. That dream was for a school in the woods, where kids could be kids, and where those children could learn about nature, while surrounded by nature. The dream calls for a community of learners who share in the successes and struggles of their peers, operating always from a place of inclusion and togetherness. The students in this school will grow and mature and find unsuspected strengths. That is the dream of this school, and we dearly hope that everyone reading this feels the pull of this same dream.

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7. **2025-2026 SCHOOL CALENDAR**
	1. **Academic calendar.**

The 2025-2026 official school year will contain 180 days of school. We have largely followed the RCPS calendar, BUT will not be utilizing certain of their designated teacher workdays in order to ensure we have the required number of academic days in our school year.

* 1. **Inclement weather policy**

The school staff uses their best judgment any time there may need to be consideration of a delay or cancellation for extreme weather. We take the decisions of local school jurisdictions into account, but because our students rely on private transportation instead of buses, we may differ in our school’s response. Decisions about school closure or delay will be communicated via both email and our Slack app channels as well as the website and broadcast information for WHSV News, located on the web at: <https://www.whsv.com/weather/closings/> Our staff makes the decision for our school based on their best timely judgment and with as much forewarning as practical. Most importantly, we encourage families to be safe and stay home if they do not feel that it is safe to drive.

We do not anticipate using any virtual class framework on cancelled days. Make up days are likely to come first from teacher workdays, and then from Spring Break times; we do expect to keep our 180-day school year.

* 1. **Electronic calendar is available online.**

The calendar is visible to parents on Transparent Classroom, our classroom management software. All holidays and teacher workdays, as well as special events, should be on that calendar.

* 1. **Winter and Spring Showcases**

The students will have an opportunity to demonstrate some of their work and give brief performances during the Winter and Spring Showcase events, both listed on the School Calendar. Parents are strongly encouraged to come to show support and celebrate our learning community. The format will include a pot-luck dinner prior to the student performances, so please let us know if any family member has dietary restrictions.

1. **SCHOOL ROUTINES FOR PARENTS**
	1. **Drop-off and pick-up procedures**

Parents should enter the drop-off/pick-up loop only from the Beulah Road main entrance. The loop is one-way, and entering from the wrong side will cause issues for others and yourself. Parents should drive to the designated drop-off zone, put the car in park, and then help children to get out of or into the car quickly and efficiently. We aim to be good neighbors, and blocking Beulah Road needs to be avoided. Do not pass other parked cars in the fire lane unless school staff specifically acknowledge that you may do so. If you or your student need extra time for either pick up or drop off, please park in another spot out of the way in order to not delay others.

We will aim for all students to arrive between 8:15 and 8:30. If you have an emergency or unavoidable conflict that requires you to drop off your child earlier than 8:15 AM, please speak with the Head of School to see if we can accommodate your needs.

At the beginning of the school year, we will ask for a list of approved drivers to pick up each child – if a person is not on the list, we will not be able to release the child unless a parent has provided confirmation that this is expected. Ride sharing is encouraged, but we will need to be aware of all such arrangements.

* 1. **Opportunities for parent participation**

Our Fridays are primarily outside and focused on nature and the outdoors. These are also days during which we will encourage parents to make pre-arranged visits to contribute their knowledge to our students. Even if your particular skill set is NOT particularly woodsy, you are welcome to make suggestions to the staff about how you can participate. Maybe you know juggling, or know how to make a kite, or have a knack for storytelling. Those are all worth sharing!

Please note that although weapons on school grounds are prohibited under Virginia Code § 18.2-308.1, subpart (E) of that code section does allow for possession of knives on school grounds if part of a permitted school function, which would include parent participation in our activities.

Our school aspires to provide a welcoming and non-judgmental community for all students. Please do your part, whether on grounds or at home, by not discussing other students or families in front of your own child. We want all parents who visit us to not only brighten the day of their own child, but that of all of our children!

* 1. **Field trips and community service**

We aspire to have multiple field trips during the school year, but will need to rely on parent assistance to provide transportation. These trips will depend on school family participation, and we will attempt to give as long of a notice around dates as possible.

We also aspire to be a positive force within our community, and will be on the look-out for opportunities to be of service to others. These will always be optional and outside of standard school hours, though there may be days during which there is overlap with afterschool enrichment. Please provide us with suggestions and ideas!

* 1. **Entry to the building during school hours**

Entrances to the school are to be locked during school hours, after drop off and before pick-up. If a parent or family member needs to enter for any reason during school hours, the school’s main number should be texted for admittance and notification also given via Slack, to ensure that a staff will be able to let you child in. To avoid delay, it would be best practice to notify the school of this visit in advance.

1. **SCHOOL ROUTINES FOR STUDENTS**
	1. **Daily educational schedule**

The students’ daily educational schedule will begin at 8:30 in Patience Hall with yoga and morning meeting. After that, each class will separate to their respective classrooms on most days for their morning academic block until recess at 11:45. Lunch is slated from 12:30 until 1:00. The afternoon block will focus on enrichment activities and project-based learning outdoors. The school day ends at 3:00, with pick-ups expected to be done by 3:15.

Our movement instructor will be on site weekly, and we hope to have other “specials” from visiting experts when possible.

* 1. **Homework policy**

All students are expected to participate in activities and events that occur during the school day. Homework is generally not assigned for the Lower Elementary classes, though the students often have independent reading to take home. The Upper Elementary class is more likely to have semi-regular commitments of work to do at home, and the expectation is that these will be done within a reasonable period of time. We hope that parents of students in both classes will encourage students to keep up with assigned reading.

* 1. **Tardiness**

Being tardy in the morning is difficult for everyone involved: the teacher must disrupt teaching a lesson or moving through their morning routine in order to welcome and guide the late student. The late student may feel embarrassed or stressed, and the other students are distracted from what they are doing. Tardiness will be tracked, and repeated instances will be a subject for discussion with parents to attempt to address the situation.

Please strive to inform staff as early as possible if the morning is not going as expected and your student is running late.

* 1. **Absences**

Absences will be tracked. Missing too many school days is a cause for concern because that can have an impact on the student’s education. That said, it is expected that family trips or events may take students away from class; we encourage families to use their judgment in planning such absences while bearing in mind that some life experiences absolutely justify missing some school time. If you know your child will be missing school in advance, please communicate with your teacher so that your child can be coached to think and write about his or her experiences while in the moment.

* 1. **Lunches and snacks**

The school does not provide cooked food to our students or guarantee that lunches from home can be heated on site, though we do make our microwave available to students for their use. EFS strongly encourages all parents to provide a healthy meal to our students every day, including fruits and vegetables to the extent that your child will include them in his or her diet, along with proteins and carbs. We further encourage all “green” options for lunch packaging – reusable containers are what we would love to see every day from each student. We discourage food sharing at lunch time, but do not wish to expressly forbid it; for that reason, it is important that we are made fully aware of any potential allergens for each student and that those students are themselves made aware of the need to not consume food not prepared in their own homes.

We allow the consumption of healthy snacks during the day, in order for the students to maintain their energy and focus. As with lunches, we encourage green packaging options and healthy snack options.

We allow students to provide special treats on birthdays, but please do remember to provide enough for all students in the class, at a minimum, to avoid hurt feelings.

1. **RECOMMENDED STUDENT GEAR**
	1. **Clothing and extras**

We aim to spend as much time outdoors as is reasonable during our afternoons, and that will often entail getting wet and/or muddy. Each student should keep a stash of clean and dry clothing appropriate for the season available. Parents should bring a fresh stash of clean and dry clothes every time their child needs a new change of clothes at school.

We recommend that each student have good quality walking shoes and also some all-weather boots for wet days. Rain jackets and pants are also advised for those days. If students bring backpacks to school, we prefer that they be smaller sized rather than the extra-large backpacks which can hold a half-dozen textbooks.

* 1. **Permitted electronic devices**

Edson Forest School is taking an intentionally tech-lite posture, and we do not want students to have phones out for any reason during the school day. The school has a dedicated computer for topical research, which can only be used under adult supervision. We understand that there may be exceptions on certain days, e.g. an early pickup for an appointment for which the student needs to know when to meet his/her ride. We also understand that some students may have medical conditions that justify having a phone and app to assist in monitoring, and we in no way intend to bar such legitimate usage.

1. **STUDENT CODE OF IDEALS**
	1. **The code**

Each classroom will design and agree to its own class charter which will set out the expectations for the students in that class. In addition to the class rules, we have a Student Code of Ideals which is intended to be aspirational in nature. While we feel it is important to provide proscriptive rules for health and safety, we refer back to this document rather than adding into the Code a list of things to do or not.

The Student Code of Ideals:

At Edson Forest School, we expect each student to take an active part in his or her own education; to be a helpful and kind member of our learning community; and to take on the challenge of being a positive force in the world. Each of us must do our part to make this school the best it can be, for the benefit of all its students.

* 1. **Restorative Justice**

EFS intends to make a reasonable attempt to implement a practice of restorative justice whenever practical. That is, rather than hand down punishments for rules infractions, we will engage in dialogue with the involved student or students, including both parties in the same dialogue in case of a dispute between students. Our staff will attempt to model good communication to express feelings and needs, in hopes that students will be able to follow suit and become able communicators with their peers.

* 1. **Zero Tolerance for Violent Action and Behavior**

Notwithstanding our strong preference for conflict resolution via interpersonal negotiation and understanding rather than the imposition of punitive measures, EFS and its staff also believe that certain actions and behaviors cannot be tolerated in a learning community such as ours. If a situation arises in which a student intentionally causes or intends to cause severe harm to another person while on school grounds on at a school function, that student will not be allowed to continue in the school, and will be disenrolled as described in the EFS educational contract. This extraordinary measure will apply in any case in which staff reasonably believes there is an unacceptable risk of actual or potential violence.

1. **MISCELLENY**
	1. **Illness policy**

Children are going to get sick, and parents must keep their children home from school when that happens. Please respect others in our school community and keep any child home who has a fever of over 100o F, and for at least 24 hours after that fever has subsided. Please communicate with your child’s teacher as soon as you know your child is ill and will be missing school. Please also discuss any specific illness or ailment (e.g. head lice, pink eye, skin rash) so that teacher can confirm appropriate isolation or remediation. If a child exhibits symptoms of illness or expresses physical discomfort during the day, a parent or guardian will be called in order to have the child come home. Staff can only provide over-the-counter analgesics with parental consent. Please note that EFS will maintain a mask-optional policy as long as there is low to medium community spread of any airborne disease; the school reserves the right to move to a mask-mandatory policy for indoors time in the event of severe community risk of communicable disease.

* 1. **Diagnostic Assessments**

EFS has the capacity to offer adaptive diagnostic tests in the Fall for some new students in order to gauge that student’s current levels of mastery in math and English. These tests are purely optional, and we do not have any required testing. If a parent requests, we can offer those adaptive tests at the end of the year for any individual. If staff believe it may be appropriate to give additional tests at a later date, this will be discussed with parents before testing.

* 1. **Digital photo policy**

Edson Forest School will not use any digital image of any child on its website or social media accounts in which identifiable features of that child are shown, unless parents of that child have agreed. In general, we will not post public pictures where children’s features are identifiable. The school management software used by teachers to share photos with the whole school may have identifiable features shown because these channels cannot be shared with others outside of the school.

* 1. **Class placement**

The placement of a child in the Upper or Lower Elementary class is a matter of staff judgment. Because the school follows a practice of mastery learning, it may be appropriate in some cases for a student to be in a different class than his/her age-peers. In general, however, our staff will endeavor to keep students of similar age in the same classroom.

* 1. **Communication with and from instructors**

The School prefers for parents to communicate directly with instructors via each instructor’s school email account. Text or Slack may also be reasonable vehicles for communicating about illness or delays, but email should be used for academic and classroom issues. Teachers should not be expected to check emails during the school day, and a 24-hour response period for most inquiries should be expected. It is not appropriate to call at teacher on that teacher’s personal line in most cases, unless this has been prearranged with the teacher and parent.

* 1. **Safety considerations**

The School maintains a general liability insurance policy; it is expected that each student will have appropriate medical insurance in case it is needed. Our school allows a wide range of outdoor play to encourage physical and mental development of our students. This outdoor play may involve acts of balancing, jumping, or climbing which could lead to injury. Instructors will use their best judgment to prevent risk-taking behavior which is unreasonable, but some risky play will happen. Knees will get scraped, elbows skinned, and bruises are to be expected.

Although we encourage students to develop their gross motor coordination through vigorous play, we will maintain some non-negotiable rules.

* + 1. No child will ever climb or pass the white playground fence, leave the tree cover next to the road, or enter any street.
		2. No tree or structure climbing should ever result in the students’ feet being more than 6 feet off the ground.
		3. No child should ever act in such a way that there is a reasonable anticipation of danger to another. This includes throwing at or menacing another person with a stick or rock.