

**Leap for Joy Outdoor Academy**

**Parent Manual**

**Philosophy**

At Leap for Joy Outdoor Academy, we believe nature is the best classroom for young minds to thrive. By immersing children in the natural world, we aim to foster a deeper connection with their environment, sparking their curiosity, creativity and love for learning. We value hands-on experiences, free play and guided exploration as essential components of a child’s development. Our philosophy is rooted in the belief that outdoor education enhances physical health and promotes mental well-being, resilience and a sense of environmental stewardship from a young age.

Here at the Outdoor Academy, we focus on developing the inquisitive nature of a child, their large and fine motor skills, self-discipline, and connections with peers. Although learning opportunities are provided with lessons that are connected to nature, the seasons and our world (salmon spawning, nocturnal animals, habitats, flora and fauna, hibernation and other adaptations) the most important element is building your child’s confidence, finding their individuality, learning to regulate their emotions and helping them to become active contributors within our group and adaptive skills that follow them throughout their school years.

The biggest contributor to Leap for Joy Outdoor Academy’s educational philosophy is a child’s imagination! So be prepared to watch them learn and grow. We know that you’ll be just as excited to hear about the adventures that take place during their day.

**Our Class Schedule**

8:55-9:05/12:25-12:35: Arrival, Attendance, Safety and Equipment Check

9:10-9:25/12:40-12:55: Welcome song and circle, warm-up game, group discussion

9:25-9:35/12:55-2:05: Exploration and discovery to our designated learning space

9:30-10:30/1:00-2:00: Play, discovery, exploration and spontaneous learning

10:30-10:35/2:00-2:05: Handwashing and preparing for snack time.

10:35-10:50/2:05-2:20: Snack time and tea is poured.

10:50-11:10/2:20-2:40: Circle time, games, sit spot.

11:10-11:15/2:40-2:45: Backpacks on and prepare to depart

11:15-11:30/2:45-3:00: Exploration back to the designated pick-up area.

11:30/3:00: Dismissal and Attendance sign out.

**Tuition**

One Day per week: $120

Two Days per week: $220

Friday Program: $155

**Payments:**

September payment is due on August 15th. Each following month will be paid on the 1st.

The payment system used will be “Wave”. Each month you will receive an invoice prior to the 1st as a reminder. \*Fees are due regardless of if your child attends for the month\*

Through Wave you can set up a credit card or bank transfer. Etransfer’s are also welcome.

Etransfer email: nicoleleapforjoy@outlook.com

**Late Tuition/ Pick-ups**

**Late Fees:**

$10/day will be added to the invoice due to late payment.

**Late Pick Ups:**

Please ensure you are arriving on time to pick up your child.

-A late charge of $15 will be added for every 15 minutes late. (If you know ahead of time that you will be late, please call the lead staff member to inform them. We recognize that life happens and things can be unavoidable).

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**The Role of the Parent**

-To keep contact information up to date. Due to the nature of this program, parents must remain easily accessible.

-To make sure that arrival times and departure times are respected. There is a 10-minute window for drop-off and pick-up times. Please be respectful and be on time.

-To make sure that your child is equipped to be outside in all-weather types. Children will encounter many elements of nature. This means that they will be playing in mud, water, sand etc.. Appropriate clothing is required, and a safety check will be conducted before a parent leaves. If a child is not well equipped, they may be asked not to attend that day or a parent may be asked to remain with their child. (Please refer to the warm clothing guide on the website for layering information). If you need any additional information or help with choosing clothing please ask a staff member, we are more than happy to help!

-To make sure that monthly fees are paid on time.

-To be aware of all Leap for Joy Outdoor Academy policies and procedures. It is important families are fully on board with the philosophy of the program. This is a unique form of education that requires families to be excited and engaged in their child’s learning. Understanding the ideas and concepts of this type of education will make you and your child’s experience successful.

-To know and communicate your child’s strengths and limitations. Children are taught and given a sense of responsibility for themselves, their class peers and their community. Because of this, children need to be able to gauge their level of risk-taking while under the watchful eye of instructors. Children are encouraged to take healthy risks ie. Climbing on logs, playing with sticks, wading in shallow puddles and water. Teachers are always vigilant and close at hand to gauge risk-taking.

-To be responsible for daily communication. Parents need to remain in contact with teachers. Please keep your cell phone on you while your child is in attendance. In case of emergency, parents will be called and may be asked to pick up their child early. This could be in the case of an injury that requires an ambulance, a sudden weather change or a child who becomes sick.

-To be available to attend classes if requested by an instructor. Parent participation is welcomed and encouraged! If a child is having difficulty adjusting to the routine or exhibiting unsafe behaviours that impede the learning of other students. In that case, a parent may be required to remain with the class for their child’s safety until the behaviour is deemed safe.

-To be aware of risk factors that your child may be in contact with. Due to the fact we operate outdoors in nature, your child may encounter some less avoidable risk factors. Some of these risks may include stinging nettles or thistles, insects (including bees and wasps), shallow water, thicker vegetation, wild animals and thorns from sticks or plants. All safety risks are taken into factor before entering a location. Staff are always aware of safety factors and dependent on the location, will determine if a higher level of observation, limitations, expectations or interactions are required.

Staff/child ratio is at 7-1 to provide a safe experience for the students.

**The Role of the Child**

**-**To be physically and emotionally capable of participating in an outdoor learning environment. Children must be able to listen and follow instructions respectfully, walk for a lengthy period and carry their own backpacks. All staff understand that children are at different developmental levels and may require occasional guidance but for the safety of the group children who demonstrate certain behaviours may be asked to withdraw from the program. (Example: Running away from the group, aggressive behaviour or disrespect to staff and park).

-To be inquisitive. To ask questions and enjoy exploration.

-To be responsible for their belongings including their backpacks. A list of all required items will be given at the beginning of the year. Each child will learn the responsibility of taking care of their pack.

**Licensing**

It is important to note that Leap for Joy Outdoor Academy Ltd. is an unlicensed program. Because we operate fully outside without an indoor facility, we are unable to be licenced in British Columbia.

**Weather**

Due to being an outdoor program the occasional weather event will close our classes for the day. If this happens, texts will be sent out first thing in the morning or the night before.

\*If public schools are closed due to a weather event, we will also be closed (this includes snow days).\*

**Wind:** Per insurance and work safe BC, if wind gusts are above 60km we will close for the safety of the students and staff. If wind gusts pick up during the day, a decision will be made during class and you will receive a phone call from the lead staff member to pick up your child early.

**Heat:** Any days above 35 degrees, class will be cancelled.

**Freezing Rain:** Class will be cancelled in the event of freezing rain

**Thunder and Lightning:** Classes will be cancelled

**Animals:** Occasionally, there may be a wild animal (cougar, bear, etc) that we encounter. Each lead staff carries bear spray in their kit and have been trained on our wild animal procedure. If we are aware there is a dangerous animal in the area, class location may be changed for that day.

Cougars: staff will evacuate the students out of the forest and into their vehicles. Parents will be called to pick up their children.

These decisions are non-negotiable and are made with student and staff safety in mind.

**Illnesses**

-If your child has shown any illness in the last 24hrs such as vomiting, diarrhea, cough or green discharge from nose or eyes, we ask that you keep them home.

-If your child has been in contact with a communicable illness (covid, hand foot and mouth, measles, etc.) please inform staff ASAP. The sooner we know, the easier it is to contain the spread. In some cases, the Health Unit may be informed.

If your child takes any form of medication prescribed by a doctor that will be taken at school it must be in the original container from the pharmacy. Staff must be made aware of any medication that will travel with your child.

If your child uses any emergency medication such as an inhaler, EpiPen, epilepsy medication, etc. You are required to fill out a medical consent form.

-A backpack tag will be added to your child’s bag with a medical alert notification. This is so we can locate their backpack quickly in the event of a medical need. Please leave this tag on their pack for the duration of the school year and alert the lead staff member if a new one needs to be provided.

-In the event of a medical emergency staff will decide if an ambulance needs to be called. The sequence of events will be as follows: 911—parent---Nicole Crowe (Owner). Each staff member will be capable of deciding if a higher first aid is needed than what we offer at the Academy.

**Allergies**

Parents are responsible for alerting staff if their child has an allergy. This includes food allergies (lactose, celiac, peanuts, etc).

Please note that food sensitivities are not an allergy. We will inform your class if there is a peanut or severe allergy. If this is the case it will affect the entire class and you will no longer be able to send that food item.

**Staff to Child Ratios**

Here at the Academy, we have a student/staff ratio of 7-1. In the event the ratio cannot be met (staff illnesses, lack of coverage, emergencies), class may be cancelled and a make-up day will be offered.

**Arrival and Departure**

Your child must be picked up and dropped off by an approved adult on your registration form. If someone not on the form will be picking up your child you must inform the staff at drop-off. The adult picking up your child will be required to bring their ID to show the lead staff member before your child is released to them.

If your family has a custody agreement you are required to provide a copy of the agreement to Nicole Crowe (owner). You must make staff aware if there is a no-contact order involved or if a child is not to be released to another parent.

You must check in and check out your child with the lead staff member. Do not drop or pick up your child without verbally confirming with the lead staff to be checked in or out.

All children must be signed in and out with the name of the person who is picking up or dropping off. Attendance is taken each day for emergency reasons. Please make sure to park and walk your child to the designated adult.

If a parent arrives after we have entered the forest, please call a staff member so that we may let you know where we are.

Our schedule will not be held up due to late arrivals. There is a 10-min. period in which we check the dress code and have a welcoming circle. Once this has been completed, we will enter the forest. So please make sure to arrive on time.

Please respect our safety zone around the parking lot. The children are taught not to enter the parking lot unaccompanied by an adult. Do not encourage your child to walk towards you to your vehicle. Rather come to the gate/pick up area so that we may dismiss your child.

**Snack/Lunch**

At the Outdoor Academy, we offer a shared snack experience. Parents must send one food item to share with the group. Upon arrival, a teacher will place your child’s snack into the tray provided.

Examples: One fruit cut up, a handful of strawberries cut up, a granola bar cut into pieces, a small container of fishy crackers, a few muffins cut into quarters.

Please be mindful of making sure food is prepared in a clean and safe environment.

**Friday Program:** Individual lunch (No shared snack)

If there is an allergy in the class, parents will be made aware and these food items will not be allowed for that class.

Additionally, if your child has a food allergy, you are welcome to send along a separate snack just for your child that contains safe foods.

Hot Drinks: During the winter months, tea, hot chocolate, or apple cider will be provided to the children during circle time. Please attach a mug, labelled with their name, on the outside of their backpack with a carabiner.

**ALL ITEMS THAT ARRIVE WITH YOUR CHILD NEED TO BE LABELLED WITH THEIR NAME**

Children will wash their hands before sitting down for a snack.

**Advertising and Social Media**

Throughout our school year the teachers will take photos of our day and post them to our private Facebook parents page, they may also be posted to our main Instagram or Facebook page. Included in the registration package will be a photo consent form if you do not wish to have your child posted.

Private Facebook Page: Leap for Joy Outdoor Academy Parents Page

**Field Trips and Parent Participation Day**

The Outdoor Academy will attend 2-3 field trips throughout our school year. Parents are always welcome to join us!

If a parent wants to become a consistent parent volunteer, they must obtain a criminal record check through the Chilliwack RCMP.

**Concerns of Child Abuse**

Leap for Joy Outdoor Academy has a firm no-tolerance policy for any physical, mental or verbal abuse. All staff members are mandated reporters.

Any disclosure of abuse or suspicion of abuse, made by staff, shall be reported.

It is your right as a parent to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect. If there are any concerns while your child is enrolled at Leap for Joy Outdoor Academy Inc. please contact Nicole Crowe (Owner) 604-316-5505 immediately and the appropriate authorities.

All staff members are required to obtain and pass a criminal record check.

**Clothing for the Year**

The Outdoor Academy operates in all weather and we have no indoor facility.

When dressing your child, please keep in mind the weather outside.

Our website leapforjoyoutdooracademy.ca has a great guide for winter weather guide. If you need help choosing options, reach out to any staff member and we will be happy to guide you in the right direction.

**Dressing your child**

Fall/Spring:

-undergarments

-regular layer (comfortable clothes they can play and climb in), shorts, t-shirt, long sleeve, pants, etc.

-A warm layer (sweater, fleece jacket, warm options)

-Muddy Buddy/Rain gear

-Hiking boots, rain boots, runners. (Weather dependent).

Winter:

-undergarments

-base layer

-fleece layer

-puffer layer

-muddy buddy/rain suit

-OR snowsuit

-Snow boots with warm thick NON-COTTON socks.

\*Please do not send your child in rain boots for the winter months. The rain boots do not hold in heat and make the children’s toes too cold.\*

PLEASE NOTE: Your child may be sent home if they arrive underdressed and not equipped with the proper gear. We would rather your child be overdressed than underdressed. It is easier to cool them down than warm them up.

**Backpack List**

**Fall/Spring Backpack:**

-A full LABELLED change of clothes (underwear and socks included) in a ziplock bag.

-Water bottle

-Muddy Buddy/ rain gear (if it is not already on their body)

-empty ziplock bag for wet clothes

**Winter Backpack:**

-A full LABELLED change of clothes (underwear and socks included) in a ziplock bag

-Extra layers- fleece layers & puffy coat

-A mug attached to the outside of the backpack (November – March).

-Mittens – 6-8 extra pairs of dollar store mittens. These will be layered underneath the children’s large winter mittens. (the more extra mittens the better!)

-Winter mitts.

-Empty ziplock bag for wet clothes and mitts

-Hand/foot warmers (optional) – Costco has a big box of hand warmers available near the fall months that children like to put into their mittens.

**Bathroom**

Please ensure your child goes to the washroom before they arrive in the morning.

Staff members will remind children throughout the day and take them as needed.

Some of our locations have outhouses that we use, others we do a forest pee.

Only staff members will be allowed to take children to the bathroom. No parents (unless it is your own child), student teachers, volunteers or university students will be allowed to.

**Animal Encounters and Emergencies**

In the event of an animal encounter (bear, cougar, etc.) all staff members are trained on our dangerous animal procedures. Staff carry bear spray as well.

If there is an animal in our area we may relocate the location for the day – Texts and phone calls will be made in the morning.

If this occurs during class, staff will evacuate the children from the forest and into their vehicles. Parents will then be called for an early pickup.

**Emergencies:**

Missing children: You will be contacted immediately if your child has gone missing and the appropriate authorities will be called. Staff are continuously making head counts throughout our day and boundaries are marked with cones for the children.

Earthquake: Staff will instruct children to get down on all fours in a group and we will make our way to an open area. Once the earthquake has ended, staff will assess any injuries and evacuate the children to the parking lot. Parents will be called for early pickup.

At the beginning of our school year children are taught all about what to do in the event of an emergency at The Outdoor Academy. We practice animal drills, safety calls and teach the children what to expect in emergency or weather event.

**Communication and Contacts**

**Nicole Crowe (Owner):** 604-316-5505 nicoleleapforjoy@outlook.com

Facebook: Main Page: Leap for Joy Outdoor Academy

 Parents Page: Leap for Joy Outdoor Academy Parents Page

Locations changes: Will always be a text first thing in the morning and posted on our parents’ Facebook page or an email/text the night prior.

**Team Leads:**

**Rae Palmatier**

Manager

Lead Fairfield/Browne Creek

604-316-8534

**Celia DeVry**

Lead Rotary

604-798-7817

**\*\*Please note that phone/text hours for lead employees are between 9am and 3pm.\*\* If there is an emergency after hours please call /text Nicole at 604-316-5505**

**Holidays/Closures**

The Outdoor Academy follows the regular school calendar for major holidays.

**Christmas Break:** December 23 – January 3

**March Break:** March 17- March 28

**Stat/ Holiday/Staff Closures:**

September:30

October:14

October: 25 (Staff training day)

November: 11

February: 17

April:18, 21

May: 19

**Last Day of Classes:**

Friday Program: June 20th

Regular Preschool: June: 17th

Graduation: June 18/19th

**A few other quick notes as we begin our school year:**

-Staff members are there to supervise, teach, encourage and mentor the students. Any bullying, hate speech, violence, or hostility towards staff will not be tolerated. And will result in an immediate removal from our program.

-We encourage risky play here at the Outdoor Academy; this can include, but is not limited to, zip lines, tools, bow and arrows, climbing, swimming, paddle boarding, canoeing, stick play, mudslides, hiking, rough–and–tumble play, and playing at speed. All play is supervised by staff.

-No outside weapons allowed. No pocket knives, straight knives, slingshots or fire-making supplies. If your child arrives with any of these they will be confiscated and given back to the parent at the end of the class. Two warnings will be given, if there is a third offense your child will be removed from the program.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to Nicole at 604-316-5505.

See you in the forest!