FOREST SCHOOL
PARENT HANDBOOK

a helpful guide for learning in the outdoors
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Who We Are

The Rochester Museum & Science Center’s (RMSC) Cumming Nature Center (CNC) is a dynamic, 900-acre environmental education facility that celebrates the unique landscape and culture of the Finger Lakes region through experiential learning opportunities and thoughtful exhibits. Educational programming at CNC explores the complex relationship between humans and the natural world. These programs are designed to inspire innovative thinking among participants and provide them with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to take action in the face of local, regional, and global challenges.

The mission of Forest School at Cumming Nature Center is to provide an emotionally and physically safe environment to cultivate a lifelong appreciation for the natural world. We nurture the intrinsic connection between children and nature through unstructured play, curiosity-driven learning, and outdoor skill development. Through Forest School, students learn to be resilient, self-reliant and confidently inquisitive.

Forest School programs are designed for children from early childhood to age 12. CNC also offers a weekly Field Studies program for middle school students (ages 13-15) and a full-time high school program called The Walden Project (ages 14-19). Learn more about these programs at RMSC.org/Cumming-Nature-Center.
Our Approach: Fostering the Flame

The core of our Forest School philosophy is that Nature is the teacher. Within an outdoor setting, children are given the freedom to explore their world directly, developing the intrinsic relationship that each child already has to the natural world. To help parents envision how this approach plays out, we use the metaphor of a fire:

At the Center: The Flame in Each Child

The Child’s Direct Connection to The Natural World

The primary relationship that we consider in Forest School is the child’s direct connection to the natural world. Information does not flow from nature to adult to child; rather, the child directly interacts with and feels part of nature. If we see this connection between child and nature as a small flame, then we picture all of the work that we (parents, staff, and volunteers) do as an attempt to protect and feed this fire. This clarifies our task: we are not introducing the child to nature as if they were strangers, but instead trusting that the child is already on their path to a lifelong connection to the natural world, aided in part by our intention and support.
First Ring of Support: Protecting the Flame

Physical and Emotional Safety

We recognize that a cold, wet, or nervous child is not going to build fairy houses or marvel over the wonders of the natural world. The first measures of support that parents and staff can provide a child are comfort and safety, both physical and emotional.

1. Physical Comfort: from Parents
The parents’ best contribution to Forest School is to send the child with warmth, sustenance, and permission to freely play (get dirty!). Dressing in appropriate clothing (see packing list!), and toting hot food when necessary, are keys to a happy day. Parents also play an important role by dropping off their children with confidence, supporting effective communication between teachers and their child, and supporting their experiences in Forest School with a positive attitude acknowledging their joys, as well as their challenges.

2. Physical Comfort: at Forest School
The woods and the weather can be intimidating to anyone, especially children. We want each child to feel at home in the woods, so we return to the same camp most weeks. A warm fire to rest by and warm their hands at becomes a central focus and a sort of check-in point. Tea with honey is a comforting treat that we have most days, and this can give a child something to do to when they feel a little disoriented and need to warm their hands. A hot water bottle inside a big wool sock becomes a hand oven. These small measures help children feel comfortable and safe while at Forest School.

3. Emotional Comfort: Dignity and Respect
Nature Mentors strive to earn authority and respect by honoring the dignity of each child and respecting the hard work they are doing just by being out in the elements, spending a day in the woods with us. Knowing that the weather and unfamiliarity can be a challenge in and of itself, we approach discipline with positive statements, gentle redirection, and a supportive presence. Positivity is a key element to holding the space for children to feel comfortable exploring the outdoors. For example, if a child’s mittens get soaked it is not seen as an inconvenience but as a critical part of learning about the world. Wet mittens are met with “Wow! You sure had fun in that mud, huh!? Good thing you brought extras!”

4. Emotional Safety: Presence of Attentive and Caring Adults
Nature Mentors are a listening presence, there to make each child feel comfortable to ask questions, to participate at his or her own comfort level, and to foster the type of group dynamics where no one feels embarrassed to say that something is new to them. Our reflection activities include group songs to highlight special memories and gratitude from the day, and activities like “Rose, Bud, and Thorn” which allows each child to share something they liked, something they’d like to try or do more of, and something they didn’t like. Their reflections have very much shaped the program.

5. Physical Safety: Presence of Trained and Knowledgeable Adults
Most important, of course, is the physical safety of the children. Nature Mentors always carry: a radio to contact the nature center in case of emergency, a first aid kit, and access to all the children’s emergency contact info and allergies, etc. We have an average teacher-student ratio of 1:7.

It is essential for parents to understand that their child will: climb trees while also learning how to judge the safety of a tree branch; build and feed fires while also gaining respect and appreciation for the powerful heat and smoke such a wonder provides; get wet in the creek while developing a deeper connection to all their senses; use fixed blade knives and hand saws with supervision and instruction within the Cutting Circle; build shelters with logs and limbs; and so much more. Such activities do contain risks. Forest School teachers are here to help children navigate the many paths that lead to confidence and ability in the outdoors through the lenses of safety, mindful awareness, and skill building.
A predictable rhythm allows the children to know what to expect and feel part of something familiar and comforting. Repetition of familiar songs, characters from stories who show up again—all of these elements help the child to feel this experience is truly their own. We make plenty of time for play and projects. And we know when to stop for tea, songs, mindfulness, and stories. This makes sure that there is a chance for children to regroup, to go inward for a bit and to quietly take in everything around them. We strive to get to a place each semester where transitions are few and seamless, and the children know just what to expect. One of the benefits of lots of time spent outdoors with the same group is the joy of being part of a tradition and community, and we hope the children begin to feel deeply connected to the nature center landscape and people.

The following sections detail the daily rhythms and activities that occupy each age group on an average day.*

*Note: during the 2020-2021 school year Forest School groups will be split up by priorities other than age due to COVID-19 safety measures (i.e. family groups, homeschooling vs. hybrid schooling, etc.). Please call the nature center for more details.

**Daily Rhythms**

“What do parents owe their young that is more important than a warm and trusting connection to the Earth…?”

– Theodore Roszak, *The Voice of the Earth*

**Toddler Forest School (early childhood to age 4, w/ caregiver)**

Toddler Forest School provides parents and their young children with natural space to nurture their relationship through curiosity-driven learning, hands-on activities, basic outdoor awareness, and nature play. Outdoor play allows the children to honor their strong developmental need to jump, twist, tug, pull, balance, roll, run, climb, dig, sort, build, weave and create. This play also develops fine and gross motor skills, executive function, spatial awareness, balance, coordination, kindness, and empathy. Toddler Forest School encourages students to be resilient, self-reliant, and confidently inquisitive while preparing them for the adventures that await in the longer day of regular Forest School.

Each session of Toddler Forest School will feature story-telling and activities that invite you and your child to explore the world beneath the arms of tall wise pines, to find comfort in connection and community, to delight in
the fresh air, to squish in the mud, to be creative or to sit back and observe, enjoying songs and nature play under the gentle guidance and cheerful support of our knowledgeable educator.

Before or after their Toddler Forest School session, caregivers who have other children in Forest School may use the Nature Center, hike on their own, or leave until pick-up.

Younger Forest Schoolers (ages 5-8)

Up until about age seven, a child learns most effectively through play and with bucket loads of imagination and movement. We do not expect the younger Forest Schoolers to sit still for much! Example activities include stories, songs, games, purposeful work, guided adventures, and free play. With group activities at the beginning of the day and a story and song at the end, the bulk of their day is spent in unstructured play.

The Value of Unstructured Play

Many children settle right into something imaginative; a big downed tree becomes “the train,” and a mud area is the factory. To support this type of play, we often “strew” things about. A strategically placed basket of pine cones, or a rope, shovel, and bucket gives them the simple props they need to let their imaginations run wild. Digging under roots, squishing mud between their fingers, building fairy houses, stacking frozen ice heaves into castles...this simple play teaches much more than we could with words, and it is the pinnacle of the young child’s experience at Forest School. Free outdoor play also allows the child to honor the strong developmental need to jump, twist, tug, pull, balance, roll, run, climb, dig, sort, build, weave, and create. They work together, using their strong imaginations and ideas to sort out all types of social situations with each other. We witness them problem-solving to create the worlds they envision. It might not look like much, but this type of play is developing both fine and gross motor skills, executive function, spatial awareness, kindness and empathy, balance and coordination. The cognitive benefits of outdoor play are immeasurable.

Extreme Cold – Younger Children

Although experiencing what it is like to step into an icy-cold stream or to use a hot water bottle on a blustery day are valuable for sensory and cognitive development, younger Forest Schoolers will leave their camp for the Nature Center after lunch on days in the low 20s or when the wind chill is bitter (*see Winter Weather). Afternoons on such bitter cold days will be spent playing fun games, hearing stories beside the cracking fire downstairs at CNC, opening animal tracking boxes, doing crafts and—if everyone seems warm and happy—possibly heading back outside for short stints of winter play!
Older Forest Schoolers (ages 8-12)

Around age seven or eight, a child seems to be ready to focus more on curiosity and less on imaginative play. At this point, the children join the older group and begin to have their attention called more clearly to the processes going on in the natural world. While the younger children are learning primarily through play, the older child is learning primarily through hands-on, inquiry-based learning. This format sets the stage for increased mentoring of the child’s curiosity, opportunities to actively inquire about how things work, and building a foundational connection with the human and ecological community.

Our older Forest Schoolers, being both observant and playful, take a closer look at the complex relationships in the natural world. Having grown in experience and competence regarding personal needs in the outdoors, these children are far less likely to need to discover how getting wet might feel in the cold, or how certain actions affect their body needs. Older children are better able to stay warm, consider possible outcomes of their actions, and apply their growing skills in the outdoors to benefit themselves and their community. They also enjoy examining the changing seasons through guided hikes, continuing their skill building, and curriculum-based adventure.

**Purposeful Work, Observation, and Curiosity-Driven Exploration**

The older child’s understanding of nature and science are deepening. Their foundation has made them comfortable in the elements. The trees, soils, mud, creeks are familiar by now. They know what a cold, wet boot feels like, what different soils and sands feel like in their hands, what plants come up first, and how to build a fire. They are ready to be challenged in new ways! Activities are still driven by the group’s curiosity and a desire to nurture people to be lifelong lovers of the outdoors; still rooted in ideas of invisible teaching and sharing knowledge through community, work, exploration, and time spent with mentors.

Older children will also dive into hands-on science activities, practice reflection in their journals, and venture further into outdoor skill-building and naturalist knowledge. Nature Mentors continue to demonstrate that it’s fun to contribute to community, and may ask for more of the older children in these roles. It is our hope that this mentality helps develop a child’s sense of self, sense of confidence, and sense of community, while building on a deepening relationship with the environment.
The Role of the Nature Mentors

While the children settle into their play, the Nature Mentors are holding the space and fostering three things: purposeful work, observation, and exploration. We take care of camp and everyone’s needs, we make time to notice the beautiful world unfolding around us, and we head out to explore all that's beyond our little camp.

Purposeful Work

The adults engage in purposeful work that children will become curious about. This might be carving sticks, sawing wood, gathering wood, building a shelter, cooking, making tea, etc. With an eye toward safety, we allow the children to work with a folding saw while an adult stands next to them, or to carefully work on carving a stick with one-on-one adult supervision. This purposeful work allows us to move in and out of the children's play, keeping a barometer on how everyone is doing without seeming to interrupt them. Children will often jump into our work when they seem to need a break, and then incorporate back into the group’s imaginative play. The work the children are able to do contributes to their sense of place and community. Unlike other environmental education models, which might treat the child as an observer in a teacher-led program, Forest School helps children identify and occupy useful space in the magical and natural world around them by interacting with their surroundings in very self-directed and experiential ways.

Observation

Observation during playtime can be as simple as pointing out the geese overhead and listening for their wingbeats as they cruise in and out of the fog. It might be more specific, like bringing egg cartons and gathering different types of soil to compare. Nature Mentors wouldn’t necessarily call the whole group’s attention away from play to observe something (unless it is REALLY cool) but observations we make together are among the most poignant moments of our day, as well as building blocks for our budding naturalists.

Curiosity-Driven Exploration

Each day, one or two Nature Mentors will head off to explore with a smaller group of children for an hour or two. Age-appropriate learning adventures provide an opportunity for quiet and reflection, to see a new spot in the woods or to revisit a familiar place and practice observation. One group of older children may explore concepts surrounding woods knowledge, ecology, science, or survival skills, while children in the younger group may make their own journey of discovery in a playful and meaningful way. We are usually graced with signs of animals and various natural wonders. Nature mentors are there to be a knowledgeable resource. While we answer questions and notice things with them, we understand that it is far more effective to let a child come to a conclusion on their own, and try to make space for them to do this safely and confidently.
General Information

Drop-Off/Pick-Up

Our day begins promptly at 10:00 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m. Drop-off should occur between 9:45 and 9:55 am. Please be sure to sign your child in! Late drop-offs will require that the parent walk their child out to their campsite after signing their child in at the Welcome Desk.

Contact Information

To notify Forest School staff that your child will be late or for general inquiries/information, please call the main CNC line. For specific questions related to Forest School or your child’s experience, please contact Angela Cannon-Crothers (see email below).

Main CNC phone: (585) 374-6160

Address: 6472 Gulick Road
Naples, NY 14512

Angela Cannon-Crothers
Environmental Education Coordinator
Email: angelacc@rmsc.org

Nathan Hayes
Director of Cumming Nature Center
Email: nhayes@rmsc.org
Packing List

A major achievement of Forest School participants is experiencing and enduring the outdoors year-round. Our hands-on programs take place in all types of weather and usually require that we fully immerse ourselves in the environment. It is essential that children come prepared for the day’s weather and with the understanding that it is ok to get dirty! Comfort and proper clothing are of utmost importance for your child's learning experience. The packing list below is cold-weather specific and can be adjusted for warmer months.

Please bring the following items to every session:
- Mask (be sure to pack an extra or two!)
- Backpack
- Water bottle (thermos in colder weather for warm drinks)
- Snack
- Lunch
- A clean cup and a spork
- Naturalist Notebook (will be provided)

What to Wear:
Dressing in layers is the best way to stay warm in the colder months. Stay away from cotton fabric in cooler weather (which is most of the year around here). When cotton gets wet, it will NOT keep your child warm.

Head:
- Hat (in colder weather, one that covers the ears)
- Scarf or neck gaiter

Torso:
- Base layer (wool or synthetic recommended)
- Middle layer shirt (wool or fleece recommended)
- Raincoat or windbreaker (when needed)
- Down coats are great when used with a shell layer

Legs:
- Base layer (wool or synthetic recommended)
- Middle layer fleece recommended (if needed)
- Pants (wool or water resistant recommended)
- Outer pant (rain pants optional but can keep your child dry). One popular solution are the rain pants with suspenders similar to these
- Snow suit in winter!

Feet:
- Socks (base layer) synthetic, silk, or wool mix best for cool and cold
- Over Socks (bigger) wool blends*
- Waterproof boots for muddy and wet conditions
- Snow boots when needed

Hands:
- Mittens or gloves in colder weather (double layer with waterproof outer shell works great)
- at least one extra pair of mittens
- Thin, non-cotton, lunch gloves for cold days. These enable your child to handle food items and still keep their fingers warm.
Bug and Sun Protection:

- **NOTE:** It is very important to do a thorough tick check after Forest School! Removing a tick early and safely is a great defense against tick-borne illness. Always save the tick in a zip-lock bag to have for testing if necessary.

- A brimmed hat is one of the best defenses against sun and buzzing bugs!
- Consider both the child and the environment when deciding on insect deterrents. Those containing pyrethrins or DEET are highly effective, but should never be used on children’s skin. Note that long-lasting pyrethrins, sprayed on boots and pants, can be just as effective, but can also be hazardous to aquatic life if freshly sprayed (for example, that morning). Please read cautionary labels. Many safe and natural bug sprays are available! Ask us for suggestions if you are unsure!

- Another great way to stay protected is with clothing. Keeping covered with long sleeves, long pants (and boots or socks over pants) and a wide brim hat, are very safe and effective methods for dealing with both sun and bugs!

- A spring day when no leaves are on the trees, or even a sunny winter day, can expose your child to too much sun. Zinc-based sunscreens are suggested.

**What to Leave at Home**

Please do NOT send electronic devices or potentially hazardous objects. On occasion, tools, including lock-blade knives, may be appropriate but must be shown to a teacher and used in the Cutting Circle area. **Always check with an instructor** before sending a tool out into the woods with your child.

Bringing toys from home is discouraged. Personal toys can get dirty and broken and may cause problems when others want to play with them. Better yet—if you child would like to bring a doll, truck, or horse they can let us know and we could try making one out of natural materials. The forest holds cordage materials, acorns, wood, sticks (there are hundreds of things to do with a stick!), mud, bark, leaves and so many things for your child to play with! Encourage your child that their beloved toy will be waiting when they get home, but they can create a toy at Forest School.

We do make exceptions for sleds and skis if we have appropriate conditions and space to use them.
Health and Medical

NOTE: Information related to COVID-19 is posted at RMSC.org. Parents can also reach out to CNC staff for further information on related precautions and policies.

Our instructors have first aid training and carry first aid kits at all times, along with each child’s medical information. If your child requires medication and you cannot provide it before the day begins, let us know so that special arrangements can be made.

Scraped knees, nicks and bumps are cared for at the camp. Our approach is that little events are part of the learning process. All minor injuries are met with assurance and cleanliness, and encouragement with your child’s ability to have confidence in themselves. Staff will discuss any minor injuries with parents at the end of the day. Any injury involving a bump on the head or one of any other concern, will initiate a call home to parents via the Nature Center. Such a call home does not deem an emergency, or that a child needs immediate pick-up, but that you, the parent, have time to make any decisions regarding care before you arrive for pick-up.

The Forest School program can be physically demanding for little ones. Please be aware when deciding if your child is well enough to attend, that a child unable to participate fully due to illness will have a negative experience and requires a greater share of instructor time and attention. We unfortunately do not have the staff resources to nurse a sick child. If your child becomes unwell we will keep him or her comfortable and call you to come pick him or her up.

Winter Weather

Weather-Related Closing

We follow the Naples School District’s decisions on inclement weather. If the Naples School District is closed, so is Forest School. See the Communication section below for contact information.

Severe Cold

Forest School Nature Mentors demonstrate that when prepared with knowledge and skills about the outdoors, and/or when well-fed and properly clothed, one can be comfortable and confident in the outdoors! Although we desire all of our students to develop a love for the outdoors in all the myriad types of weather, we want to be certain that our youngest schoolers are given the time and nurturing necessary to build their skills and abilities in more severe conditions. Because of this, younger children will head back to CNC on days in the low 20s and below or on days with severe wind-chill. At the Nature Center they will have opportunities for indoor games, discovery animal boxes, crafts, and stories. Younger children brought inside may have shorter excursions back outdoors when possible. Older children will be staying out for the duration of the day unless conditions are extreme.

Forest School follows the following the general winter weather and wind chill guidelines, taking into consideration the abilities and preparedness of each group: Winter Weather Guidelines
Conflict Resolution

At Forest School we support students to respect themselves, each other, and the Earth. We recognize that these are skills young children are just beginning to acquire and our goal is to role model, coach, and facilitate them. We use reminders and logical consequences to manage conflict through empathy, self-control, talking and listening, and seeking agreement.

An example of a logical consequence for us is to remove a child from a specific activity if he or she is having trouble participating appropriately. In this case, we suggest something else for the child to participate in and, depending on the situation, might also suggest some quiet time in their own spot. If, after some coaching, your child constantly has difficulty meeting any of our basic expectations we will let you know so we can all put our heads together about how best to resolve the situation. We would also inform you—during program hours if appropriate—if there is behavior that could be a danger to your child or others. If the behavior is extreme or repeated we will attempt restorative practices, but we reserve the right to separate the child from the program indefinitely after consultation with the parent.

Volunteers

Forest School welcomes volunteers on an as-needed basis but ideally for a full season or year. Our volunteers have made wonderful contributions over the past couple of years and greatly influenced everyone’s joy and development. Teen volunteers who are willing and able to engage with younger children, work alongside teachers, and participate fully as role models are a wonderful asset to the program! Many volunteers have special skills to offer—we are always looking for photographers, heavy lifters, or the ability to multi-task while building a friction fire and singing our newest song! Background checks are required.

Interested? Contact information is available under General Information. We’d love to hear from you!
Meet the Forest School Nature Mentors!

Angela Cannon-Crothers

Nature Mentor Angie is the Environmental Education Coordinator for Cumming Nature Center as well as a former cloud collector, glacier-side botany research assistant, US Forest Service naturalist and wilderness ranger, and college instructor of soil and environmental science. She holds degrees in ecology, environmental science, and teaching certification, as well as a M.S. in Environmental Education and Interpretation from the University of Wisconsin. Angie is a spinner of tales and texts whose publications include regional and national magazines, anthology inclusions, a novel, an award winning collection of nature essays, a children’s book, a non-fiction book on herbs and seasonal celebrations, and two poetry awards. A mother with twenty-five years of experience in EE at centers in Minnesota, Wisconsin, New Hampshire and Vermont, joining Forest School at Cumming Nature Center in 2016 was by far the most intriguing and inspiring program she has been involved in; one that causes her to marvel daily at the wild children she gets to interact with, and the mysterious magic of a perfect fit.

Winona “Nona” Brown

Nature Mentor Nona started with Forest School in 2020. Some of Nona’s hobbies include canoeing, dancing, singing, somersaults, squelching around in the mud, and building fairy villages. Her goals for this year of Forest School are: laughing a lot, learning something new from everybody, seeing an owl, and finding lots of mud to play in!

Jim Davison

Nature Mentor Jim began as a Forest School volunteer in 2019 and became an official instructor in 2020. His hobbies include woodworking, tree climbing, and teaching. His goal for this year of Forest School is to teach everyone about the world around us and his favorite snack is chocolate chip brownies!
Haley Pasquale

Nature Mentor Haley has been working at Cumming Nature Center for two years. She loves swimming in ponds, balancing on logs, traveling, dancing, and eating as many cherries in a sitting as she can stomach. She previously worked with two other nature connection organizations (Living Earth School in VA and Camp Kaniksu in ID).

Simon Conrad-Reingold

Nature Mentor Simon started as a nature mentor in 2020 after volunteering with Forest School for a year. He is a climber, hiker, runner, reader, naturalist, outdoor educator, teacher, forest mentor, and a certified Emergency Medical Technician (EMT).

Donna Richardson

Nature Mentor Donna is also known as Damselfly Donna! Her goal in doing Forest School is to keep the world green for the next generation. Her hobbies are snowshoeing, salamander seeking, bird observing and acorn collecting. She previously worked at Montezuma Audubon Center and at Seneca Park Zoo where she worked with the penguins. She also worked at the Toledo Zoo in the bird department. Her favorite food is S’mores, chocolate chip cookies and fried bananas!
Mason Minerva
Nature Mentor Mason started working for CNC as a summer camp instructor and is excited to transition to Forest School. His goals for this year are to have fun and learn new things alongside the Forest Schoolers! He loves rock hounding, playing Frisbee, and skateboarding. His favorite snack is pretzels!

Grace Davis
Nature Mentor Grace started with Forest School in 2020. She has a pet bird, a snake, and a lizard. She loves all types of animals! For fun she likes to kayak, make art with pressed flowers, paint, read, explore creeks and rivers, and go for hikes. Her favorite ice cream is panda paws and her favorite color is blue.

Jonathan Jensen (Jon)
In addition to being a Nature Mentor, Jon is a husband, dad (of 4), brother, son, uncle, teacher, friend, and coach. He has been with Forest School for over a year and his children have been part of Forest School for even longer! His hobbies are eating and moving, and his goals for this year are P.E.—which stands for Play and Explore!
Molly Jensen

Nature Mentor Molly has worked at summer camps for CNC and is excited to be a part of Forest School this year! Her goals for the year are lots of outdoor exploration and staying warm outdoors in winter! In her free time she likes to walk with her dogs, climb trees, and read.

Elisabeth Cowley

Nature Mentor Elisabeth joined Forest School in 2020 and leads Toddler Forest School on Fridays. She loves to explore and get dirty in the woods. She adores butterflies and flowers, and absolutely loves singing! Her favorite color is warm yellow. Sometimes Elisabeth sees fairies and sprites in the woods—and if you get to become really good friends with her, she might tell you the story of the Little Green Stone Eater!

Moonshadow

Moonshadow (the one with the fur!) also answers to the name Moon and Nature Mentor Moon. Their favorite hobbies are chasing sticks, chasing balls, and running around with kids (who Moon loves to herd like sheep). Some favorite foods include doggie biscuits and venison (but not on the hoof!). And yes, Moonshadow is named after the song!
Songs and Quotes

Songs

I Love the Mountains
I love the mountains, I love the rolling hills
I love the flowers, I love the daffodils
I love the fireside when all the lights are low
A boom-di-ada, boom-di-ada, boom di-ada, boom di-ada boom

Earth My Body
Earth, My Body
Water, My Blood Air,
My Breath Fire, My
Spirit

I am the Earth, walking I
am the Air, talking
I am the water, flowing I
am the fire, glowing

We’re all a family
We’re all a family under one sky, we’re a family under one sky (clap, clap) We’re
all a family under one sky, we’re a family under one sky (clap, clap)

(children make verses reflecting on that day, and everyone repeats) example: Dante:
I saw a squirrel ALL: Dante saw a squirrel
Elder: We found teeny tiny acorns ALL: We found teeny tiny acorns
Nature Mentor: Violet lead us deep into the woods! ALL: Violet led us deep into the woods!
Ernie: And we saw a mother Robin ALL: and we saw a mother Robin

We’re all a family under one sky, we’re a family under one sky (clap, clap)We’re all a family under one sky, we’re a family under one sky (clap, clap)

Through the gate
Through the Gate, Into the pines, Our boots are muddy, our hearts are kind (two
go in middle and choose an activity to act out)
Building fires all day long, all day long, all day long, building fires all day long here at forest school
(then put hands together like london bridge and everyone goes under while singing verse again)
Through the Gate, Into the pines, Our boots are muddy, our hearts are kind

I am a red pine
(Arms raised like the red pines, in two rows facing partner, making a “hallway”) I
am a red pine, tall and free, but a rooted tree I’ll always be
See the children down below, playing, running to and fro
(First two children pick something to do and skip, run, hop, etc… down the row)
**Heya Ho**
Tall trees Deep water Wide fields Tiny puddles I can feel it in my body, in my spirit in my soul Heya heya heya heya heya heya ho

Cool breeze Warm fire Feel the rain Drop of water I can feel it in my body, in my spirit in my soul Heya heya heya heya heya heya ho Heya heya heya heya heya heya ho I can feel it in my body, in my spirit in my soul

**Burn Fire Burn**
Burn fire burn Stoke your inner fire Let to coal inside you rise And blow that flame to life

**The Fire**
The fire from the sun feeds the fire to the trees feeds the fire that we light tonight

Fire, fire burning brightly heat shield us with your light

**The Gnome Game**
I Traveled (jump when you say this) FAR across the sea, I met a gnome and old was he (stoop over and twirl beard) I said to him “where do you live?” And this is what the gnome told me: Follow me to the jumping land, the jumping land, (Everyone jumps from point a to point b) the jumping land. If you wish to live with me, follow me to the jumping land.

Children take turns picking something to do (swimming, crawling, hopping, helicoptering, etc…) good one to end with teacher saying “listening” and then to start the story.
Quotes

If I had influence with the good fairy that presided over the christening of all children I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength. - Rachel Carson

If a young child has been able in his play... to give up his whole living being to the world around him... he will be able in the serious tasks of later life, to devote himself with confidence and power to the service of the world. - Rudolf Steiner

Children should not cull the fruits of reflection and observation early, but expand in the sun and let thoughts come to them. - Margaret Fuller Ossoli

I sincerely believe that for the child, and for the parents seeking to guide him, it is not half so important to “know” as to “feel”. If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow. - Rachel Carson

I have made no conscious effort to name plants or animals nor to explain to him, but have just expressed my own pleasure in what we see, calling his attention to this or that but only as I would share discoveries with an older person. Later I have been amazed at the way names stick in his mind... I am sure no amount of drill would have implanted the names so firmly as just going through the woods in the spirit of two friends on an expedition of exciting discovery. - Rachel Carson

As we get closer to nature, we find that the subject of our study is not actually nature at all, but life, and the nature of our own selves. - Joseph Cornell

The way kids learn to make good decisions is by making decisions, not by following directions.” - Alfie Kohn

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