

# Maypop Forest School Handbook

## **Land Acknowledgement**

It is with gratitude and respect that we acknowledge we are learning, speaking, and gathering on the ancestral lands of the Cherokee, Choctaw, Powhatan and Shawnee, and Yuchi people. May their ways continue to inspire our lifelong commitment to learning how to be a better steward to the land. We pay honor and respect towards their ancestors past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all and act as stewards of the land we occupy.

More information: [Land Acknowledgment Native Land](#)

## **Welcome**

For those of you who are new to the idea of forest school, we operate outdoors year round. By observing children's play in the forest, we see how the natural world can evoke powerful questions of wonder and stimulate elaborate and imaginative thinking. We know that many children spend a great deal of time inside, or inactive, and forest school offers a different approach to learning. This exploration provides opportunities for children to experiment with risk assessment. We have shelter and keep our bodies safe and comfortable by dressing accordingly. During the winter months we keep a fire to have access to warmth, cooking, and to allow students to feel like active participants in their community. This exercise is an example of how one skill can branch out to cover a multitude of disciplines. We trust children and believe they are more capable than some adults often perceive. Below is an in-depth summary of everything you will need to know about our school and how it operates. We are open to your questions anytime at [Maypopforestschool@gmail.com](mailto:Maypopforestschool@gmail.com)

## **Illness Policy**

In order to ensure the health of our community, Maypop Forest School (MFS) participants are asked to stay home from our program if they have experienced any of the following symptoms in the past 24 hours:

- Fever
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

- Significant, unexplained rashes
- Significant cough
- General lethargy

In the case where one of the above illnesses occurs during the class, the affected participants will be required to return home. Keeping in mind that, while experiencing these symptoms or even more mild cold symptoms, being outside in the elements is likely quite uncomfortable and unpleasant for children.

Any participants affected by an illness (such as measles, chickenpox, mumps, whooping cough, strep throat, influenza, mono, RSV, Covid-19, pneumonia etc) are asked to stay home from class until their health care provider has communicated that it is safe for them to rejoin public programming.

### **Covid-19 Policy 2023 Session**

In the case that you, your child, or anyone in the household tests positive for Covid-19, we require a negative test result from the student in order to return to class. Masks will not be required for students or educators. Educators are fully vaccinated. Families are welcome to wear masks.

***Please note that there are no refunds or make up classes for missed days due to illness.***

### **Toileting and Handwashing**

Our school offers an outdoor compost toilet and outdoor hand washing stations. Indoor facility available. Acknowledging that this group of students will vary in toilet learning skills, we offer space for toilet breaks often and trust students to listen to their bodies.

### **Eating and Drinking**

Communal snacks are an integral part of our daily rhythm. We believe socializing around the preparation, eating, and cleaning up of meal time is important for the social and emotional development of the child.

Food provided will consist mostly plant based. Meals will have a grain, fruit or veggie element with the occasional side or topping.

Ex: Toast Bites; Local bread with avocado and sesame seeds

Ex: Oatmeal Bowls; Rolled oats with apples and cinnamon

## **Water**

Appropriate water containers are to be provided, must be leak-proof and have a large enough capacity to keep your child hydrated. Our school provides a Berky water filter refill station for students. Educators will provide one electrolyte beverage to students on hot days.

## **A Special Note about Food Allergies**

There may be children in the MFS program who have significant allergies. As a part of our acceptance package, we have a required form that inquires about allergies. Please inform us of any new or pre-existing allergies. Meal time is experiential and students will have opportunities to try new foods. We encourage guardians to be aware of food consumption and work with children on what works for them.

## **Elemental Protection**

MFS asks that you dress your child appropriately according to the weather. Here are some examples of seasonal appropriate attire:

### **Seasonal Layering Systems for Forest School**

#### **Cool Rainy Day Clothing (Fall/Winter/Spring):**

Base Layer: Synthetic or wool long john shirt and pants; wool socks

Mid Layer: Fleece or wool sweater and pants

Outer Layer: Durable, WATERPROOF raincoat and rain-pants; warm toque; waterproof, insulated mittens; waterproof boots (Bogs, Kamik or similar)

Extra Layers: 1-2 pairs of wool socks, 1-2 pairs of waterproof insulated mittens; warm toque; mid layer as indicated above; underwear.

Optional: Extra boots

#### **Cool Dry Day Clothing (Fall/Spring):**

Base Layer: Synthetic or wool long john shirt and pants; wool socks

Mid Layer: Lightweight fleece or wool pants and sweater

Outer Layer: Warm jacket; durable rain-pants, waterproof boots, waterproof mittens; warm toque

Extra Layers: 1-2 pairs of wool socks, 1 pair of waterproof insulated mittens; mid layer as indicated above; underwear.

#### **Warm Rainy Day Clothing (Fall/Spring):**

Base Layer: Lightweight, synthetic material t-shirt and long sleeve; lightweight, synthetic material pants (quick-dry material is ideal); wool socks

Outer Layer: Durable, WATERPROOF raincoat and rain-pants; waterproof boots

Extra Layers: Fleece Sweater; wool socks, toque

Optional: Extra boots

#### **Warm Dry Day Clothing (Fall/Spring):**

Base Layer: Lightweight, long pants that can easily be rolled up; t-shirt; lightweight synthetic socks

Outer Layer: Fleece sweater or jacket; closed toe running shoes or hiking boots; sun hat

Extra Layers: Extra socks; base layer

Optional: Bug jacket (Spring)

### **Cold Winter Day Clothing:**

Base layer: Long john shirt and pants made of wool, silk, fleece or polyester; wool socks

Mid layer: Wool or fleece sweater and pants; fleece or wool neckwarmer

Outer Layer: Warm, waterproof, windproof and breathable snow suit; warm toque; waterproof insulated mittens; warm waterproof boots

Extra Layers: 1-2 pairs of wool socks; warm toque; mid layer, 1-2 pairs of insulated mittens

Optional: Extra boots, hand-warmers, extra snowsuit

## **Land and Environmental Ethics and Leave No Trace**

Maypop educators aim to teach the children how to be stewards of the land. The belief is that our youth will play a vital role in the protection of our Earth and its resources in future years. The first step in this important learning process is for youth to be given the opportunity to spend time in nature and to build their own relationship with the natural world. During daily programs, the children will learn about and practice environmental ethics in the forest, respecting the land they use and travel through.

MFS uses and teaches the LNT principles to guide our time spent in the forest whenever possible.

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel on durable surfaces
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Respect wildlife
- Be considerate of other visitors

## **Risk Management**

Educators will aim to balance children's desire to experience and navigate risk in the natural environment. Being able to recognize risk, experience risk and learn how to manage risk is an important part of healthy child development. Therefore, in many instances, MFS educators will strive to co-assess risk with the students and parents to

work together to formulate a plan to manage it. Some of the risks inherent to a nature based school and outdoor play in general include, but are not limited to: (please see Liability Release Form for a more detailed list of inherent risks)

- Injuries from executing strenuous and demanding physical activities, possibly on uneven ground in the forest
- Splinters, scrapes, bruises, blisters
- Contracting poison ivy
- The presence of wild animals and ticks

We trust children and believe they are more capable than some adults often perceive. We respect children as equals, deserving of gentle reminders and explanations.

While participating in our program, you might observe a child doing something you perceive as risky or potentially harmful. It is our ask that instead of immediately reacting and taking control of their behavior the response should be to pause, observe, and assess risk.

With hopes that each child will learn how to navigate risk, Maypop's goal is not to keep children from all risky situations, but is instead to teach children how to safely navigate the risks that they encounter in the forest. In order to do this, it is required that children are able to respond to educators' voices (or animal calls!!) at all times. MFS works to create an environment that is as safe as possible by being proactive and by using sensible, simple guidelines that the children (and adults) can remember. Our safety principles include:

- Constantly assess risk as conditions change (dynamic risk assessment) and conduct regular risk/benefits assessments of site and activities.
  - Done daily and dynamically as the environment changes both with and without the children.
- Set up a safe space with boundaries and safety guidelines.
  - Children respond to a bell call to stay within view of the educators at all times.
  - Children are made aware of safety guidelines regularly.
- Carefully observe the children's interactions with each other and with nature.
- Spot the children during more challenging physical activity ex. climbing.
- Gently guide the children to safer activities if required. If MFS educators observe that the children's play is becoming dangerous and/or not following the MFS safety guidelines, the children will be redirected and reminded of the safety guidelines established as a group.

*The following guidelines and phrases are examples that educators will use with the children as they are guided toward safe choices in our natural playground.*

### **Hiking**

When we walk through the forest, we are in a sandwich. One educator will be in the front and an educator or volunteer will be in the back. The children may not need to be in a line, but they do need to be inside the sandwich.

### **Boundaries**

When we play in the forest we stay where we can see a teacher. When needed, boundaries are established with the input of the children. Educators watch to ensure that the children do not move beyond the boundaries. Educators remain in close proximity to the children at all times. If groups are working in different areas, there is an educator available for each small group. A child is within the "boundaries" if they can easily see an educator and an educator can see them.

### **Sticks**

Sticks are for building, digging, and imaginative play. They are not for hitting. When we run, we put the sticks down. We are aware of other's space. We keep sticks away from others' faces. Children are taught to keep sticks down low when in a group and how to create a "safety bubble" when on their own.

### **Rocks**

In our safety bubble (the area a few feet around our body), we may throw rocks that are as large as the palms of our hands. We throw rocks only where they won't disturb others (animals, birds, people). Children love to throw natural objects and they will be given the safety parameters on how to do this.

### **Climbing**

We may climb as high as we are tall. We only climb as high as we can climb on our own. We only climb when an adult can safely spot us (watch us and keep us safe). Educators are present only to spot a child and will not physically assist them to climb higher. If an educator can't be present or cannot safely spot the child, the child will not be able to climb.

### **Water**

Our school does not have a body of water on campus but we are located on the other side of the Harpeth River. If a planned visit to the river occurred, educators would engage in a conversation with the children about safety considerations while around the water.

## **Inclusivity and Accessibility Statement**

MFS strives to create a program which is accessible to a wide range of participants, regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, language, physical ability, or

socioeconomic status. MFS aims to create a community that is safe, inclusive and welcoming to all participants. MFS works to provide and source assistance for families who may not otherwise be able to participate. Maypop Forest School strives to promote an environment that is physically accessible for all participants. All children and their families are welcome in the MFS community where everyone is respected and appreciated as valued members. We encourage feedback to learn how we can improve our programs by working towards removing barriers and ensuring a safe and welcoming place in the forest.

### **Communication Strategy**

Maypop Forest School maintains the belief that communication with families is of vital importance and benefits the children best.

MFS welcomes your questions! If you ever have a question or concern about your child's learning, their experiences or their place in the Maypop Forest School's community, please email us at [maypopforestschool@gmail.com](mailto:maypopforestschool@gmail.com). All questions will be answered in a timely manner, within 24-72 hours

### **Inclement Weather Policy**

MFS will consider the forecast ahead of each program day. If we need to close due to hazardous weather MFS Educators will reach out to families, typically, prior to 8:30 am, to notify of our closure for the day. In these circumstances, the closure is likely due to extreme hot weather, tornado warnings, or severe lightning storms. In very rare situations MFS may opt to close due to severe weather as running programming outdoors in such weather may pose a risk to the safety of both children and adults. In the event that MFS is required, due to severe weather, to close early for the day, our decision will be communicated to families via the number that we have on record to reach you during our programming. Please note that there are NO REFUNDS available for MFS closure due to weather. When significant weather warrants that MFS runs programming indoors or under shelter, educators will continually assess the outdoor environment for safety and return only once they are certain the inclement weather has passed.

**2012-2024 School Calendar**

# 2024-2025 CALENDAR

## AUGUST

| S  | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|    |    |    |    | 1  | 2  | 3  |
| 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

## SEPTEMBER

| S  | M  | T        | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----|
| 1  | 2  | <u>3</u> | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |
| 8  | 9  | 10       | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17       | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24       | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 |          |    |    |    |    |

## OCTOBER

| S  | M  | T        | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----|
|    |    | <u>1</u> | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  |
| 6  | 7  | 8        | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15       | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22       | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29       | 30 | 31 |    |    |

## NOVEMBER

| S  | M  | T        | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----|
|    |    |          |    |    | 1  | 2  |
| 3  | 4  | <u>5</u> | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  |
| 10 | 11 | 12       | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19       | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26       | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |

## DECEMBER

| S  | M  | T        | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----|
| 1  | 2  | <u>3</u> | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |
| 8  | 9  | 10       | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17       | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24       | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | 31       |    |    |    |    |

## JANUARY

| S  | M  | T  | W  | T        | F  | S  |
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|    |    |    |    | <u>1</u> | 2  | 3  |
| 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8        | 9  | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15       | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22       | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29       | 30 | 31 |

## FEBRUARY

| S  | M  | T        | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----|
|    |    |          |    |    |    | 1  |
| 2  | 3  | <u>4</u> | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  |
| 9  | 10 | 11       | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18       | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25       | 26 | 27 | 28 |    |

## MARCH

| S  | M  | T        | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----|
|    |    |          |    |    |    | 1  |
| 2  | 3  | <u>4</u> | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  |
| 9  | 10 | 11       | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18       | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25       | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 |          |    |    |    |    |

## APRIL

| S  | M  | T        | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----|
|    |    | <u>1</u> | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  |
| 6  | 7  | 8        | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15       | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22       | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29       | 30 |    |    |    |

## MAY

| S  | M  | T        | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----|
|    |    |          |    | 1  | 2  | 3  |
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| 11 | 12 | 13       | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20       | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27       | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

## JUNE

| S  | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |
| 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 |    |    |    |    |    |

## JULY

| S  | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|    |    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  |
| 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 16 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |    |    |

SCHOOL BREAK

SCHOOL IN SESSION

PAYMENT DUE  
DAYS ARE  
UNDERLINED



## **Payment & Registration Forms**

The tuition of the 24'-25' school year is \$700/month. We bill on a monthly cycle, payment links will be emailed to families. See our school calendar for payment due dates.

If a payment can not be made on time please let us know in advance and we can coordinate a payment plan for that billing cycle. A late fee of \$50/week will accrue to late payments.

We have required forms to be filled out and signed before the start of our school year. These forms include an emergency contact/ allergen sheet, a liability waiver, and a photo release. All registration forms must be signed and returned either by mail or scanned and emailed to [maypopforestschool@gmail.com](mailto:maypopforestschool@gmail.com) by August 15th. If your child has secured a spot in our program, an email will arrive in your inbox about acceptance status.

## **Refund Policy**

Maypop Forest School operates with a small and intentional budget. For that reason we have a no refund policy. Please note our inclement weather and illness policies.

## **Parent Responsibility**

By registering your child for Maypop Forest School you agree to the following responsibilities:

1. Submit all forms and applicable fees prior to your child's session. If forms are not received, children will not be permitted to attend until which time they have been filled out and reviewed by MFS.
2. Ensure your child is equipped with proper clothing, outerwear, and other supplies suitable for the season and duration of the day.
3. Communicate openly with educators and provide us with any information that will assist us in meeting your child's needs. Share any changes pertaining to contact information, health or wellness needs asap.
4. Follow all policies and guidelines outlined here in the parent handbook
5. Ensure all items sent to forest school are clearly labeled.