



The Farm Playschool
Sooke, BC

Handbook of Guidelines and Expectations 2020/2021

VALUES:

Connection with self, others, and the environment

Safe, trusting, inclusionary space

Non-Violent Communication

Spontaneous learning

Creating community and a sense of belonging

Collaborative effort of parents, children, teachers.

Modeling and promoting self-regulation

PHILOSOPHY ON PARENTING

Our parenting philosophy is something we are passionate about and part of what got us interested in opening our home to other families. It can be challenging to find care for your child that fits the bill, we certainly had difficulty, so we wanted to create a space that meets the needs of our children as well as the needs of other parents and kids who prescribe to a gentle-parenting and connection-based philosophy.

As parents and caregivers, we focus on care and connection with children. We support children to make their own decisions and help them to understand how their actions can help or hurt others. We do not coerce, use pseudo-choice, or offer rewards or punishments. We use researched methods and our own instincts to work with children in a peaceful and caring fashion. We communicate compassionately and using non-violent communication. For more detail, please see the 10 Principles of Unconditional Parenting (based off of Alfie Kohn's book) listed below or google non-violent communication. Also, please feel free to ask us about our philosophy on parenting and communication.

Finally, we are interested in how human brains work and we integrate the science supporting self-regulation into our interactions with and approaches to children (as well as other adults). We work to minimize stress, we reframe behaviour as possible stress reactions, and we try to reduce stressors. We find

that talking about self-regulation and our brains, and choosing to be outdoors and to do activities such as yoga, meditation, gardening, singing, reading, and walking, can help us to learn to listen to our own needs and the needs of others. Please feel free to ask us about our thoughts on self-regulation.

10 Principles of Unconditional Parenting (Alfie Kohn)

- **Consider your Requests** - Maybe it is in what/how you have requested that the child is not responding favorably. Maybe you need to re-think what you are doing. Are you sure you want to trick the kid to get her to do what you want?
- **Put the Relationship First** - Being right isn't necessarily what matters; *it matters very little if your children stiffen when you walk into the room*; what matters is the connection, the alliance, mutual respect. From a practical perspective, the relationship counts, where the child feels safe enough to explain why she did something wrong; when you put your foot down, is it worth any potential injury to the relationship?
- **The Love has to be Unconditional** - Love withdrawal is conditional love; when it does work, the price you are paying is too high - it says, "You have to earn my love." You go away from me or I go away from you - banishment. Kids need love that never stops coming; affection that does not have to be earned. "No matter what you do, I will never stop loving you." Stop that which gives the opposite message - positive reinforcement when they are good. Items are a display of love or a tool to control - you cannot have it both ways. When we praise them for making our lives easy, they look for that. More praise, the more insecure they become, the more dependent they become on our approval. They have to know they are loved even when they screw up or fall short. They need to know they are loved for who they are, not what they do. Time out is okay when the child decides and the time is something that helps the child center - something fun, diverting.

- **Imagine how kids see Things** - Look at the world from their point of view! The more you do that, the better a parent you tend to be. When I say, "X", how does she feel? Imagine how your friends (or relatives) seem **to** your child. From a young child's point of view, we're interfering with what looks fun.
- **Be Authentic** - Do not forget your humanity. Don't pretend to be more competent than you are, apologize to your child every so often ~ you'll find a reason.
- **Talk less, Ask more** - Listen, respond, elicit, imagine her perspective - makes you a better partner, too - manager, colleague - What is *your* perspective? Good parenting includes listening.
- **Assume the Best** ~ A tribute to Children: the best possible motive consistent with the facts. Why assume the child was trying to make you unhappy? Children of a certain age cannot understand promises, sitting still for a long family dinner. Don't assume the worst. We do not always know why kids do things. Kids live down to our negative expectations. *Assume the best.*
- **Try to say Yes, when you can** - Do not say No constantly. Sometimes you have to say No. Kids don't get better at coping with unhappiness when they were made unhappy deliberately when they were young. If you say Yes twice as often as you do now, they will still get plenty of opportunities with frustration. Pick your battles. This is not to say Yes out of laziness. Provide guidance, support. Mindful parenting. Say Yes as often as you can.
- **Don't be Rigid** - Waive the rules. Be flexible. Respond differently to different children and situations, understanding the context. Predictability is good, but don't make a fetish of it. United front is dishonest - more useful for kids to see we disagree and can talk it out.
- **Let kids decide whenever possible** - Support their autonomy, bring them in on the decision making. Children will feel better about themselves. The way kids make good decisions is by making decisions. Let them decide unless there is a compelling reason not to.

OUR GOALS

- to provide a healthy, safe environment which meets children's emotional and physical needs
- to provide well balanced nutritious food with homemade and whole foods that are mostly organic
- to provide children with opportunities to learn and play together
- to provide children with creative experiences in art, music, language and sensory awareness through structured activities as well as unstructured play
- to provide children with opportunities to interact with nature and the outdoors on a daily basis through outdoor play, gardening, visits to local parks, gardening and nature activities, and encouraging and modelling a deep connection with the natural environment
- to provide opportunities for the development of gross motor skills such as running, jumping, and climbing through indoor and outdoor play
- to allow children to explore their community through field trips, walks and the participation of visitors
- to provide careful, active supervision and age appropriate gentle parenting strategies, which fosters children's connections with themselves and others
- to create a bond between parents, children, and our families

OUR VILLAGE:

A Village raises a child and in our home, we have two parents who are equally dedicated to the role of caregiver. Tyler is a full-time preschool teacher and Lyndze will be present on a part-time basis, although she works from home most days.

Meet Tyler (he/him):

I have always enjoyed being around children. As a Scout, in outdoor education and summer camps with the YMCA/YWCA, as a volunteer in preschools and public schools, and as a father of two, I have found that there is nothing more exciting than

being with kids as they discover their natural world. I believe there is little that is more valuable for children than spending time playing outside and being connected with their environment. And another essential element is being connected with themselves and others. I can't wait to meet you and your children and build connections with everyone.

Meet Lyndze (she/her):

I have worked with kids of all ages for more than 15 years. I am a certified teacher and teacher educator (I have a PhD in Education). I read and write about the politics of parenting. I have run workshops and presented on parenting and teaching at various community and academic events. I am passionate about being a part of a playschool that seeks to walk beside your child(ren). I will be assisting Tyler in a part-time capacity and I am so excited to get to know your little one.

We both have standard first aid and CPR and have experience providing a safe and connected environment of care for children pre-school and school-aged children.

Our Kids:

Finlay is 9, turning 10 in December (2020), and he loves reading, cycling, climbing trees, and to help at the playschool. He will only be present on Mondays and occasionally on Friday, and the rest of the week he is involved in activities off-site.

Shay is 7, turning 8 in January (2021), and they are a playful kid who loves nature and animals. Shay loves to craft and will prepare some of the crafts for your child(ren) over the year. They are only present on Mondays and occasionally on Friday, and the rest of the week they are involved in activities off-site.

COMMUNICATION:

I mostly communicate through email and text messages. Wondering what your kid is up to but didn't have the time to chat with me? We send out a seasonal newsletter and

there is a closed instagram album for you to check out. Have more pressing questions about how your child is doing and need more detail? Please email, call, or set-up an after hours meeting with me and we can have a tea and talk about your child.

Please note that I welcome and encourage feedback! I want to meet your needs and the needs of your child in the best way I can. Please feel free to let me know how things are going. Any problem won't be a problem if we face it together. It is important for parents and caregivers to build a relationship of trust. I'm open, let's do that!

CLOTHING and SUPPLIES:

We spend a considerable amount of time outdoors. In the winter please ensure that your child has a warm hat, as well as sturdy boots and a warm jacket. Here on the Wet-Coast, rain gear is a must! We find that **two piece** rain gear is more functional than the one-piece Muddy Buddy or Newt Suit. But, whatever you've got to keep them dry and warm is key to your child's active participation outdoors. In the winter, please pack a secondary set of clothing. This includes a hat, sweater, change of shirt and pants, as well as socks.

In the summer your child will need a sun hat and sunscreen as well as light and sensible clothing. If you prefer that your child does not wear sunscreen, it is essential for them to wear a long-sleeved shirt and wide-brimmed hat. In the summer, we love to play with water. Please pack extra clothes for the warm months, too.

If your child is using diapers, or is still learning to use the toilet, please pack the necessary supplies, including wipes, diapers, cloth-diaper bag for soiled diapers (if cloth), diaper cream, etc..

POTTYING:

Learning to use the potty is to be done mostly in the home environment with the guidance of the parents. I will assist and support in the learning but shouldn't be the sole potty trainer. For this reason please ensure that you begin teaching your child when both you and your child are ready and able to dedicate the time, patience and consistency required. Please meet with me to discuss your potty plans so that they can be supported as much as possible here at playschool. Also, please provide pull-ups until fully pottyng. Kids still have accidents and extra clothing is always a good idea. We often regress before we progress - when kids have growth spurts or they have been ill, they often regress in pottyng. Also, kids often have more success pottyng at home but face challenges when they are out and about. This is normal, and another reason to have pull-ups on hand.

FOOD & DRINK:

I am happy to provide healthy homemade snacks and lunch using the guidelines of the Canadian Food Guide. The food offered is mostly plant-based, which means that you know your child ate fruits and veggies at playschool! Hopefully this can relieve some of the stress that comes with meals at home. At The Farm Playschool, no one is made to eat anything, meals are eaten together and we learn to chat and share over food. We begin and end lunch with a song, we light a candle, and we eat together.

I can accommodate most special diets such as gluten-free or vegan but we do consume a lot of nuts here so if your child is very allergic this might not be the best place for her/him/them. If your child has other allergies (like corn or eggs) please let me know and we can talk about snack possibilities that you are comfortable with.

Please pack a water bottle so that your child has water whenever she/he/they needs it.

PICK-UPS and DROP-OFFS:

Pick-ups and Drop-offs will take place outside, in the backyard. Please enter by the side gate just beyond the driveway.

Drop-offs can be tricky. Sometimes for our child(ren) and sometimes for us. I have some suggestions if you need them. Also, we can make a plan that is unique to you if we need to. Don't worry too much, it's pretty typical and we will work with you and your child. We never leave a child who is crying or upset and we have a song we sing about the ones who care for us always coming back. In our experience, we find that children only cry for two or three minutes and then join in on the fun.

It can be difficult for me to have a full conversation with you at drop-off and pick-up times - although we might try! I will always turn my attention to any child who asks for it and this may lead to some interruptions. If you have any questions or concerns, I am always available for a chat via phone or email after hours.

(thefarmplayschool@gmail.com and 778-584-2142).

HOURS of OPERATION:

I will be ready and excited to greet you and your child(ren) as early as 8:00AM. Arrival any time before 9:00 is also fine. Arrival after 9:00AM requires a phone call/text message to me or planning ahead of time with me. Most mornings, we sing our welcome song and go for a walk at 9:00AM - we wouldn't want to leave anyone behind!

Please pick up your child(ren) between 3:00PM and 3:30PM. Additional fees may be applied if a late pick-up is ongoing.

LATENESS:

It is important for the daily schedule that drop-offs be before 9:00 a.m. whenever possible so as not to disrupt the current activity and so that everyone can settle into the daily rhythms. Of course, I understand that life has a way of making other plans for us, so please just call if you are going to be late.

This is equally important for pick-ups. Please call to let me know if you will be picking your child up early. Having said that, I do have an open-door policy so please feel free to drop by at any time to check on your child, just be aware that we will go on little excursions and walks, so it is possible that you may miss us.

If late pick-ups (after 3:30) are a consistent problem, things may get awkward. Let's talk about how to make things work for everyone!

ILLNESS:

I want to outline a very clear sickness policy to protect all of us and our kiddos so that our home continues to be a safe and healthy place to be.

If your child is going to be absent due to illness, please call me and notify me of the condition of your child. Please do not send your child if there is any question of illness, as I am not equipped to accommodate sick and/or contagious children. Also, if your child is ill, the illness could be contagious and affect not just other children but their entire family.

Children who exhibit the following will be sent home:

-Conditions of illness which make him/her/them unable to cope with the regular activities of the schedule.

-Symptoms of a contagious or transmittable illness, such as:

- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Persistent coughing
- Green-coloured mucus
- Swollen glands
- Unidentified rash
- Pain/aches
- Chicken pox
- Lice/Nits

If your child becomes ill while attending playschool, you will be notified immediately and will be expected to have an authorized person pick up your child within a reasonable amount of time. The child must be symptom free for 48 hours before returning to care.

Please inform me if your child has a contagious condition which has been diagnosed by a doctor. You will be informed of any contagious condition your child may have been exposed to while at playschool. If one of my children is ill, they will be confined to the second floor (including a separate bathroom) until they are well. Precautions will be taken to clean areas of the inside space and outdoor space to prevent transmission of illness.

PANDEMIC POLICY:

After the arrival of COVID-19, we made a few changes to the playschool to keep all of us safe. These policies are influenced by the recommendations of the health authority, the province (and the chief medical officer of BC), and recommendations from the federal government. Also being considered is your child(ren), your families, our own family, and the community. The policies and needs of all of us shift daily. This makes writing a policy rather challenging. For example, we may begin a policy that no one outside of our family and your children will be allowed into our backyard (beyond the pavement) or the house. If any of the sources mentioned above were to recommend that we don't allow anyone past the driveway, or that the risk is now low and we can loosen restrictions, we would adjust this as necessary.

So, our policy is that we, The Farm Playschool, will stay informed about recommendations and consult with our Licencing Officer as needed. We will institute policies, closures, re-openings, and other changes as needed and we will strive to communicate these changes with you. Our goal is safety! We will monitor this situation and be open to your input as well.

What will remain consistent is our Illness policy and protocol above. Also we will be washing hands with soap and water frequently and using hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available (such as on a walk). We will physically distance from adults (inside and outside of playschool), but we will not physically distance from your children or distance the children from each other beyond what is appropriate. Kids need touch and comfort, and we will still hold hands and give hugs when children request our us to do so.

You can help us by not sending toys and books from home. Also, we urge you to wash your child's hands thoroughly before and after playschool. Checking in with your kids about their health and how they feel in their body, and paying attention to their energy levels, is also helpful in detecting illness or the need to protect them if they are tired and fighting something.

We will keep you updated as the pandemic evolves and changes. Also, we are open to your feedback and concerns, so please let us know if you have any.

MEDICATION:

Parents must notify me of any medications given to their child prior to arriving at playschool. This will enable me to monitor children for any side effects. I will administer medication (prescription and non-prescription) if needed with written authorization from the parent/guardian. All medication must be in the original container with the child's name clearly written on it. Written instructions with the child's name, dosage and times must be included.

INJURIES:

No matter how closely we watch and how careful we are, accidents do happen occasionally. Minor cuts and bruises suffered while at playschool will receive proper care - they will be washed with soap and warm water and properly bandaged. Lyndze and I hold current standard first aid and CPR certifications and will continue to recertify

as needed. Injuries will be documented and reported to you at pick-up or that evening.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES:

In case of serious accident or sudden illness requiring medical attention the following procedures are followed:

1. Call 911
2. Parents or emergency contacts will be contacted.
3. Child will be sent to the local hospital.

Parents will be responsible for all costs involved in emergency treatment including emergency transportation (if required).

I will authorize only medical care that is serious enough that it must be administered immediately and cannot wait until the parent arrives.

These health policies are critical to ensuring the health of all children in my care, I appreciate your help and support.

RELEASING YOUR CHILD FROM PLAYSCHOOL:

Unless I am instructed in writing to do otherwise, The Farm Playschool will only release a child to the following persons:

- (1) the child's parent(s),
 - (2) the child's custodial parent (when applicable),
 - * (3) the emergency contact person, and
 - * (4) any other guardian to whom the parent, by way of a written authorization, allows us to release the child.
- *ID MUST BE SHOWN

GETTING DIRTY:

Please keep in mind that your child WILL get dirty at playschool. It is unavoidable and encouraged. Please ensure that your child is NOT in his/her/their "good" clothing.

You are more than welcome to drop off a "good outfit" in the morning and change your child at pick up.

ANIMALS in our PLAYSCHOOL:

There is a cat in our family. She is a little black cat you will probably never see. She is friendly but likes one on one attention so will hide in large groups. She is kept healthy and she gets lots of exercise outdoors. If you have any questions about her presence in the playschool, please ask!

There is a puppy in our family. They are a Bernedoodle born in May 2020 and arriving in our home at the end of June 2020. We will all be getting to know them and teaching them how to be at playschool. Name TBD.

We also have a small flock of healthy chickens. The chickens live in a coop in our yard. Kids are welcome to interact with the chickens if they are comfortable and will be welcome to take part in certain farm chores such as feeding the chickens and collecting eggs. Proper hand cleaning products will be available at the entrance of the chicken coop to ensure the children's hands remain clean. If you do not wish for your child to interact with the chickens please let us know and we will be happy to accommodate.

SCHOOL CLOSURES:

SICK DAYS:

Our sick day policy has changed. Please read carefully:

If I need to close because of an illness, I will notify you as soon as possible (the night before or early in the morning).

Due to the pandemic, we cannot remain open if the illness resembles the symptoms of COVID-19. If Lyndze or our kids are ill with symptoms that resemble COVID-19, we will close, contact the Health Authority, and do a thorough cleaning.

If I am sick with a non-COVID-19-like illness, Lyndze will more than likely be available

and ready to jump in for the full day, which would not disrupt service.

I do take sick-days, which are part of the cost of your child's care. As we have learned from this pandemic, sick days are important in stopping the spread of illness. I rarely get sick and would take a maximum of 10 sick days a year. Any additional sick days will be reimbursed. If we need to close and quarantine, you will be reimbursed for those days.

EXTREME WEATHER:

If there is extreme weather, and there are related school closures through SD62, we will also close for the day. This is to ensure that children will be able to get home before weather hinders travel.

HOLIDAYS and VACATIONS:

We generally follow the SD62 schedule, except that we remain open on Pro-D days and in July.

The Playschool will be closed on all statutory holidays.

The Playschool will be closed during the two week Winter (Christmas) holiday (this aligns with SD62 school closures).

The Playschool will be closed during Spring Break (the same dates as SD 62).

The Playschool will be closed for the month of August (no fees).

I may be able to provide you with some leads should you need additional care during these times.

Your child's spot is guaranteed upon reopening in September. In February of each year, we ask to know your intentions for the following school year and we offer re-registration at that time.

Should you wish to book holidays outside of this time frame full fees are required.

These are the statutory holidays each year:

- New Year's Day
- Family Day
- Good Friday
- Easter Monday
- Victoria Day
- Canada Day
- BC Day
- Labour Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day
- Boxing Day

FEES:

Fees are to be paid the first of the month for that month by cheque or e-transfer. Post-dated cheques are preferred and encouraged. Fees are specified in your contract. If you are late with your cheques or e-transfer it'll get awkward, so please try to remember!

Fees for 2020-2021 school year:

\$100 yearly program materials cost (there is no registration fee)

\$867.00/month, full-time

\$193.80/per day, part-time

There are no fees for the month of August.

Program fees are non-refundable.

CANCELLATION POLICY:

Should either party decide to terminate care for any reason one month's paid notice is required. For example, if a family notified a withdrawal on January 10th, fees for February would still be required.

PHOTO POLICY:

The Farm Playschool has an Instagram account of our daily adventures. This is a closed group so that your child's privacy is protected. If you do not want your child's photo on our web album, please let me know and I won't put them up.

VISITORS:

On occasion, there may be visitors who bring their talents to our home and their energy to our daily play. Your child will never be left alone with a visitor as the playschool and participants are the responsibility of Tyler and Lyndze. Visitors are not for the relief of the adults but for the enrichment of the children. All visitors are volunteers who love kids and have a special background in an area of interest such as gardening, music, crafts, baking, etc. Parents and extended family are welcome to share their talents!

The above policy on VISITORS is on hold due to the pandemic. We will not be allowing visitors and outside volunteers at this time.

SCREEN POLICY:

The Farm Playschool does not use screens in any capacity at any time.

ACTIVE PLAY POLICY:

At The Farm Playschool we believe that young children have an innate need to move, to be physically active, and to be outdoors. We endeavour to provide an environment that has opportunities for creative, spontaneous, challenging, and imaginative play with minimal interventions from adults.

Our daily rhythms are consistent throughout each week. Children can rely on having uninterrupted outdoor active play each morning and afternoon totalling nearly six hours. We walk everyday and explore our neighborhood and local forest and farmers fields. We offer optional guided activities to focus our energy and challenge our minds and bodies. In line with the rest of our program, connection to ourselves, others, and our environment is central to our active play.