



**wBees Forest School  
Parent Handbook  
2023 - 2024**



## Tables of Contents

Introduction to wBees.....	3
a. Mission and Core Values.....	3
b. Montessori Philosophy.....	4-6
c. Montessori Curriculum .....	..6
d. Location, Enrollment Period.....	7
e. School Calendar.....	8
f. Typical Day.....	9-10
Family Involvement	
g. Parent Communications, Involvement.....	11
h. Parent Teacher Conferences.....	12
i. Transition to Classroom + What to Bring.....	13
j. Transition in First Three Weeks.....	13-14
Policies	
k. Drop off.....	15
l. Pick up + Late Pick up.....	16
m. Attendance.....	17
n. Stroller + Scooter Parking.....	17
o. What to Bring Daily.....	17
p. Extra Clothing and Diapers.....	18
q. Snack.....	18
r. Potty Training.....	18
s. Lunch.....	19
t. Allergies + Food Sensitivities.....	19
u. Naptime.....	20
v. Outdoor time .....	20
w. Illness.....	21
x. Immunization.....	21
y. Emergency Health Care.....	22
z. Discipline Policy.....	23-25
aa. Protocol for Helping Students of Concern.....	26-27
bb. Mandated Reporter and Child Abuse.....	28
cc. Emergency Plan.....	28-29
dd. School Closures.....	29
ee. Baby-sitting / Tutoring Policy.....	29
ff. Tuition Policy / Late Payment Policy.....	29
gg. Grievance Policy.....	30
hh. Birthday Celebrations.....	30
ii. wBees Response to COVID Plan.....	TBD
jj. Staff Contact.....	30
kk. Signature Page .....	31



## Introduction to wBees

wBees Forest School, founded by Lanny Cheuck, offers a high-quality preschool alternative in the Ridgewood / Bushwick and wider community for parents and children in the neighborhood. We look forward to the coming school year filled with exploration, community and growth. Please read this handbook and keep it for reference throughout the year as it will answer many questions about the philosophy, policies, practices and procedures at our center.

### a. MISSION

We raise children who empathetically and confidently use their voice for the greater good of their classroom and their wider community beyond the walls of their classroom. We foster the development of the whole child through emotionally responsive nature-based Montessori curricula that values play.

wBees Forest School is an inclusive and respectful community of passionate teachers, engaged children, and involved caregivers. Through a connection to nature and living things, our children begin to learn their place in the world.

### a. CORE VALUES

- We value all aspects of each child: cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual.
- We follow children's interests and abilities in order to effectively scaffold, accommodate, and challenge their intellectual, physical and social experiences.
- We encourage and strive for children's independence while continually fostering vibrant daily interactions amongst peers and teachers.
- We cultivate values of respect and empathy towards one another, the larger community, and nature.
- We believe that a connection to nature, daily fresh air, and opportunities for play are crucial in the process of nurturing the whole child.

*"Whoever touches the life of a child touches the most sensitive point of a whole which has roots in the most distant past and climbs toward the infinite future."*

-Maria Montessori



## b. THE MONTESSORI PHILOSOPHY

The educational philosophy at wBees Forest School is based on and inspired by the teachings of Dr. Maria Montessori. Profoundly respectful of the child and secure in the belief that all children hold within themselves an innate desire to learn, the faculty and staff at wBees prepare themselves and their educational environments to stimulate and support the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional growth of their students. Faculty members strive to understand each student and to use this knowledge in their teaching. The curricula and classroom environments are rich in content and material, prepared with enormous care, and appealing to the senses as well as to the mind. The spirit we generate, the physical environment we create, and the behavior we exhibit all contribute to making wBees a joyous place of learning and sharing for our students, their families, and our faculty.

wBees Forest School embodies this philosophy in a number of ways:

- Concern for the growth of the whole child. We create learning experiences that promote each child’s social, emotional, and physical development as well as their intellectual growth.
- Classrooms are carefully prepared environments designed to offer a wide variety of materials and experiences appropriate to their developmental levels. The underlying structure of the physical environment facilitates the growth of children’s skills, confidence, and ability to make meaningful learning choices. The freedom to choose activities and to initiate and follow through with those individual work projects develops self-assurance and independence.
- Respect for self, others, and the environment is fostered from the earliest age. Simple tasks encourage children’s responsibility for the daily maintenance of the classroom space. A growing sense of responsibility for the larger school community develops as a student progresses through the programs and contributes to a variety of community service activities within and outside of wBees. Our staff strive to model respect for and care of our environment. All adults are expected to model respect for community members and the school environment.
- Learning is process rather than product and occurs through the active use of concrete materials. At the early childhood level these are designed to give immediate feedback, encouraging students to be self-reliant rather than adult-dependent in their learning. These materials are displayed on the shelves on a tray or in a basket and are called “works” which are part of the Work Cycle.

- Skilled teachers observe each child’s development, taking special note of particular skills, interests and passions. They continually enrich the classrooms by creating materials to stimulate the interests and meet the needs of individual students through the trajectory of each curricular unit.
- We emphasize mutual respect for each other’s person and work, with clear, flexible ground rules that encourage friendly and responsible freedom of choice in both the use of materials and in social interactions. Teachers are consistent models of calm, caring, and respectful behavior, and they clearly communicate the expectation of similar behavior from their students.
- We believe that parents and teachers share a joint responsibility for the healthy development of the students. We encourage the frequent sharing of information and ideas to foster these important alliances. Parents are encouraged to share their impressions and reactions with their child’s teachers, and the teachers, in return, attempt to keep parents well informed about their child’s experiences in school.
- As a balance to the Montessori-inspired work cycle, we also have an outdoor play cycle in a local park’s green space and play structures. Our outdoor time entails movement and many opportunities for imaginative play, sensory play and gross motor play. We believe that children gain many skills through playing that serve them throughout their life and education. Through unstructured outdoor play children gain an appreciation and understanding of the natural world around them while exercising their bodies, minds and social skills.
- We believe creative expression is critically important for children and adults alike and therefore integrate music, movement, and arts as ways to help our children express themselves creatively.

### c. THE MONTESSORI CURRICULUM

wBees has an integrated and individualized curriculum. Each class provides a robust assortment of open-ended and structured hands-on activities, which can be used individually or collaboratively with classmates as desired. Physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth occurs as children explore materials and develop skills in our curriculum areas. Each classroom offers thoughtfully designed areas dedicated to each content area: sensory-motor, practical life, math, literacy, and culture, with art, music and motor activities interwoven. Through observation and interaction, teachers plan and implement highly individualized learning paths for each child.

**SENSORY-MOTOR** materials give children opportunities to explore through their senses and develop an understanding of their environment. These concrete materials can be used in either an open-ended or structured manner and typically consist of blocks and graded components which children arrange in various patterns. One-to-one correspondence, ordering and classification are among concepts developed in this area. Sensory-motor activities lay the foundation for math concepts and writing preparedness.

**PRACTICAL LIFE** materials are structured projects and activities related to caring for oneself (dressing, combing, etc.) and one's environment (cleaning, washing, gardening, etc.). Control of movement (pouring, squeezing, twisting, etc.) and grace/courtesy (greeting, helping, thanking, negotiating, etc.) are also developed through these activities. Practical life projects reinforce critical thinking, problem solving, independence, sequencing, organization, concentration, and small/large motor development.

The classic Montessori **MATH** materials are structured and goal-oriented while remaining concrete and hands-on materials. Math operations and concepts (e.g., nonstandard measurement and estimation) are interwoven into children's everyday activities (e.g., dividing snack into portions or figuring out how many placemats are needed for lunch).

Our classrooms swim with oral and written **LANGUAGE** as children learn letter sounds, talk about plans and discoveries, and "write" through art and mark-making. Each classroom has a library and dramatic play activities. We read aloud every day—one-on-one and in small or large groups. Children "read" to each other by reading through pictures, recalling from memory, or a combination of these strategies. All children develop the foundational skills for writing by strengthening their pincer grasp, gaining familiarity with a variety of writing implements from brushes and crayons to pencils, and making marks on paper surfaces. Classrooms also have a wide range of structured visual and auditory



perceptual and phonemic activities.

Each classroom has activities devoted to **CULTURAL** awareness and broadening a child's understanding of the world around them. Concepts involving science, nature or geography are explored through maps, magnets, electricity, leaves, anatomy, chemistry and other units. Many of the units tie in with the nature-based themes that surround our school and classrooms.

#### **d. WBEES FOREST SCHOOL LOCATION**

We are located at 20 St. John's Road with our entrances through the gate and through the front door at the corner. The classrooms are bright with high ceilings and will have different areas and stations that encourage work and exploration. Our outdoor parks are Rosemary's Playground and Grover Cleveland Park.

#### **d. ENROLLMENT PERIOD**

Our main enrollment period is for a September start but we do accept mid-year enrollees depending on availability.



## e. 2023 - 2024 CALENDAR

Our school day runs from 8:45am - 3pm daily with Extended Day running from 3pm - 6pm\*. Early drop-off begins at 8am.

\*Please note that there is no Extended Day on Half Days. Extended Day ends early on October 26 for Curriculum Night.

Half Days: 8:45 am- 12pm

Our school year runs from September 6- June 24. The Administrative Team will give advance notice of any changes in schedule via email and Brightwheel.





## wBees Forest School Calendar 2023-2024

Fall Semester		
August 17	Thursday	Parent Handbook Zoom @ 8 pm
September 5	Tuesday	Class visits for all students
September 6-7	Wednesday-Thursday	First Day of School - Half Days 8:45 am-12 pm BOY Conferences in the afternoons
September 8	Friday	First Full Day 8:45 am-3 pm
September 11	Monday	First Day of Extended Day
September 25	Monday	Yom Kippur - School Closed
October 9	Monday	Indigenous People's Day- School Closed
October 20	Friday	Fall Harvest Potluck - 9:30 - 11:30am
October 26	Thursday	Curriculum Night 6:30 - 8pm / Extended ends at 5pm
November 7	Tuesday	Election Day- School Closed- Staff Half Day
November 10	Friday	Veterans Day - School Closed
November 22-24	Wednesday-Friday	Thanksgiving Recess- School Closed
December 15	Friday	Parent Teacher Conferences - No School for students
December 22	Friday	Half Day- pick up at 12 pm
December 25- January 3	Monday-Wednesday	Winter Break - School Closed - 1/3 Staff day- no students in school
Spring Semester		
January 15	Monday	Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Day- School Closed
February 19-23	Monday-Friday	Mid-Winter Break- School Closed
March 29	Friday	Good Friday- School Closed
April 19	Friday	Spring Picnic - 9:30 - 11:30am @ Grover Cleveland Park
April 22-26	Monday- Friday	Spring Break - School Closed
May 17	Friday	Parent-Teacher Conferences- No school for students
May 27	Monday	Memorial Day- School Closed
June 7	Friday	Staff Day- No school for students
June 14	Friday	Moving Up Ceremony
June 19	Wednesday	Juneteenth- School Closed
June 24	Monday	Last Day of School

## f. TYPICAL DAY

8:45 - 9:00 Drop off period/students transition into work cycle  
8:45 - 10:15 Work cycle (snack time built in)  
10:15- 10:30 Circle time  
10:30- 11:00 Potty / transition to outdoor play cycle  
11:00- 12:30 Outdoor play cycle/ transition to lunch  
12:30- 1:15 Lunch + Potty Time  
1:15 - 2:30 Naptime  
2:30 - 3:00 Snack and Story time  
2:50-3:00 Pickup  
3:00 - 6:00 Extended day (outdoor play/ art / reading / music)

Our morning begins with a Montessori work cycle where children can choose materials from the work shelves. This “free choice” time consists of children working individually or with classmates in small groups on activities initiated by the children; teacher direction is provided as needed. During the work cycle, teachers interact and work with children individually or in small groups. Individual interests, learning styles, and tempos are deeply respected.

During the work period children have opportunities for:

- dramatic play and exploration
- working with activities that develop the large motor, small motor, and perceptual areas
- working with both structured and open-ended activities
- listening and talking to classmates and adults
- literacy activities
- numeracy activities
- working alone or with others
- active involvement, thinking, sharing, and observing

After the work cycle, the teacher rings the bell to signal that it is time to clean up their works and to come to circle. During circle, we sing songs together to



welcome each other, learn each other's names, and sing about the weather, seasons and thematically relevant songs. This is also when the teachers will give a demonstration of a new work so that children will know how to use the new materials on the work shelves. We also read books together that help build community or are relevant to the unit of study.

From circle, the teacher will send children to meet another supervising teacher in the bathroom to potty, wash hands, and prepare for outdoor time. We value unstructured outdoor play for children to develop gross motor strength, problem solve with peers, engage with natural materials, and observe the changing seasons.

After this play cycle, we return to school for lunchtime. We wash hands before lunchtime and prepare for our big meal of the day. After lunch, we wash hands and transition to nap time. After naps, we have snack time, story time and close in circle. Regular day children are dismissed one at a time at the door to parents waiting outside while extended day students prepare for their next activity.

Extended day students will spend time in an additional outdoor play cycle, then return to school for snack, art projects, and free play.

## **g. PARENT COMMUNICATIONS**

We value an open communication with our parents. We keep parents updated about their child through photos on Brightwheel. Our curricula and activities will be shared through a monthly class newsletter and an additional school-wide newsletter. Our teachers will include a brief description of the activities and curricula that we have been studying along with photos. This will provide you a window into your child's days.

Teachers and staff will endeavor to respond to emails within 24 hours and we do not correspond via texts. If you have a quick message that you need to share, please use Brightwheel for messages. For longer responses, an email to teachers and/or the Administrative team is best.

If you would like to speak to your child's teachers at the end of the day to discuss any concerns or questions you may have, we ask that you kindly do so after pick-up is over. If you require a lengthier conversation, we can also schedule a meeting or phone call at a date that is convenient for both parties. All communications about your child should include all of your child's teachers.

## **h. PARENTAL PARTNERSHIP**

We believe in setting children up for success when they attend wBees and that starts with the true partnership of parent(s) and teachers. We have our students' best interests in mind and wish to partner in the care of our students as they will be with us at school for a large majority of their waking hours. Partnership means proactive communication in letting us know when there are changes in the children's routines, schedules, and big changes in their lives. We wish for best intentions always and to think of challenging behavior as something to problem-solve together. We value the school-to-home connection and believe that children thrive when they have consistency with expectations, boundaries and the language used to frame them. These are some ways to partner with us but they are not limited to this list:

- **Email the entire teaching team (not just the lead teacher)** anytime you have questions, concerns, and thoughts to set up a follow-up meeting. Brightwheel works as well and all of your child's teachers have access to the Brightwheel messages.
- Proactively share information with us when there are changes to your child's routines, behavior, and upcoming life announcements as this will help us work to prepare and respond to your child's needs.
- During meetings, we will ask questions to better understand home routines and will also share strategies or provide notes of things that we may wish for



you to work with your child on at home. This may include suggestions for routines around transitions, park time safety, or any other elements of the day that we are looking to better support your child.

- There may be times when we will ask for outside evaluations and resources to help inform us on how to best support your child.
- Operate from a judgement-free perspective that assumes best intention always. Build trust to care for your child as true partners.
- Teaching teams and our administrative staff will provide examples, resources, and approaches that we utilize at wBees to partner with families in building a successful and collaborative plan for areas of growth

## i. PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences will be held three times a year. The first will be the “Beginning of Year” conferences which will be held during the first week of school in the afternoons. The second will be held in December and the final in May. We will notify all families once the schedule is up and you will have the opportunity to sign up for a time slot that is convenient to you. Conferences will last 20 minutes long and **we request that only parent(s) be in attendance during the conferences.** We will be using Zoom and in-person meetings for Parent Teacher Conferences this year.

A conference report will be typed up and given to families for the first conference and a comprehensive portfolio of student work will be compiled and shared with parents at the end of the year.

## i. TRANSITION TO CLASSROOM

Our vision is to create a continuous and intimate environment where children feel safe and excited to explore on their own, thereby gaining independence and confidence. At the same time, we want them to learn how to negotiate within a group and begin to understand the importance of community.

For the start of the school year, we ask that parents bring in 8 printed photographs of people, places, things that are meaningful to your child (no larger than 4x6” please). These photographs will be part of the first project that they do with their teacher as they create an “All About Me” book together. The book will be part of our school library where they can return to it for comfort any time they need. They will also share the books with their classmates as we develop our classroom community all year long.

We also request that each family loan or donate a copy of your child’s favorite book for our classroom library. Children find comfort in familiar and much-loved stories and we will provide a cuddle as we read their favorite book with them during those early weeks.

Before the start of the year, please feel free to show photographs of the classroom and their teachers from our website and begin to tell them about what their day may look like.

## j. Transition period in the first three weeks:

Transition Period	Details
First week of school	<p>From Wednesday and Thursday, class will run from 8:40 - 12pm for Dogwood and Sycamore and regular day on Friday. Drop-off / pickup will be at the ramp or to the door of the classroom if you choose to come in. Drop-off instructions below.</p> <p>Seedlings will have half-groups / half-sessions for all of Wednesday through Friday and will enter at the corner of Grove / St. Johns. Seedling parents can come inside the classroom for the first week of transitions and teachers will let you know when it is time to go (approximately 15 minutes).</p> <p>Teachers will contact parents for Beginning of Year Conferences that will take place in the afternoons.</p>



Second week of school	Classes will run full and extended day for all returning students. New students may leave at 1:15pm if both the teachers and parents agree that it would be best for the students to continue to have a shorter day.
Third week of school	Full and extended day available to all students.

For the first week of school, all students will have half-sessions for some or all of the days as a way to give the children a chance to connect with the teachers, familiarize with the space and begin to internalize new school structures.

We want to slowly familiarize their bodies with being away from home. This is a new environment for all new students and one that returning students will need to acclimate so we wish to give them a little space and time to adjust. We will also hold our Beginning of Year Parent-Teacher Conferences for all new families.

If your child had a challenging drop-off, we will send a quick update of your child's progress within 60 minutes to let you know how they are doing. If they transitioned fine at drop-off, we will wait to the end of our day to share updates as our goal is to be as present with the children as much as possible. Rest assured that we will be caring for and engaging your child and tending to their needs.

## k. DROP-OFF

For health, safety and for your child's independence, it is important that your child feels that they are leaving you, not the other way around. Your child's sense of ownership over their new classroom allows them to more quickly and confidently acclimate to the new environment.

We strongly suggest allowing your child to walk into the building as opposed to carrying or strolling them up the ramp. A child who walks into the building will feel more control over the situation than a child who is carried.

It helps if you and your child have a clear and consistent drop off routine such as a hug and a kiss followed by a reminder of who will be picking your child up. In the event that your child becomes upset, remember that they will follow your lead if you consistently and confidently stick to the separation routine. Prolonging the separation process can cause your child to become more anxious, as well as upset other children in the classroom. In the event that your child is overwhelmed you may want to step outside and regroup, returning when you are ready to drop off again.

We ask that after the first transition week is over, children be dropped off between 8:45 - 9:00am.

Our teacher will open the door to arriving families when it is time for children to enter. The caregiver dropping off will sign in on a paper attendance sheet and teachers will do a visual inspection of the child's health. Teaching teams will sign in the class via Brightwheel once the children have arrived.

Children arriving late to an already bustling classroom, or circle time that has already begun can feel disoriented and this can set a challenging tone for their day. Please also consider that the attention of our two or three year old students is easily diverted when their teachers need to leave a lesson or circle time to answer the door for latecomers. For the sake of your child, as well as their classmates and teachers, we kindly ask that you drop-off on time.

At 9:05 am, we will close the door and start our day. If you happen to arrive after the drop-off window, please ring the doorbell and we will open the door for you.

\* Caregivers must bring children to proper entry of their classrooms. Please **do NOT leave your child to walk up the ramp alone or leave a child unattended on the ramp or sidewalk.**

\* **Dropping a child off at the park is not allowed for safety reasons**

\* Brightwheel to figure out best drop-off times when not in morning



## I. PICK-UP

Pick-up time is at 3:00pm for regular day students and from 4:30pm - 6pm for extended day students. We ask that all grown-ups arrive anytime after 2:45pm to get their stroller ready on the sidewalk; then, kindly line up along the building on the ramp and walk up to the door as we dismiss your child to you when the door opens for you. This will allow children to exit the building safely as you exit on the opposite side of the ramp. Once you have picked-up your child please clear the space so that other parents can safely pick up their children. Please do not unfold strollers in the gated area so that it will not block other families from entering or exiting. We do not have space indoors to facilitate pickup in inclement weather so please dress appropriately and have umbrellas for all weather.

If you are going to have someone else pick up your child, please **notify the teachers in advance via Brightwheel, share a photo ID and add the person as an approved pick-up person on Brightwheel.** We will need them to download the app on their phone and to have them upload a photograph so we know who they are. If the newly designated-person is not yet known to the staff, then we must see a photo ID at pickup time. Please introduce us to any babysitters, friends, or relatives who will be picking up your child or leave us a photo for identification.

If you would like to check in with your child's teachers at the end of the day, we kindly ask that you wait till pick-up is over for the rest of the students. You should always feel comfortable reaching out either in person, in email, or to follow up with a phone call.

## LATE PICK-UP

If you know you are running late, please notify us via email or through Brightwheel and give us an estimate of when you will be arriving. This will give us the opportunity to plan accordingly as well as reassure your child. Please note that while we understand that unforeseen things can happen with pickup, if it is a recurring occurrence, a late fee of \$20.00 for the first 15 minutes will be charged and \$1 per minute afterwards.

**\* All children are prohibited from climbing, swinging, or mounting the ramp hand railing to avoid injuries.**

### **m. ATTENDANCE**

Each classroom maintains a daily attendance sheet that parents / caregivers sign at drop-off and pickup daily. **If your child is arriving after 10am or is absent for any reason, parents must notify us through Brightwheel of the reason for your lateness or absence.** If we do not hear from you within one hour of your expected arrival time, we will contact you. Please note that we do not allow for drop-offs to occur during park time for safety reasons so children will need to be dropped off before 10:30 or after 12:30pm.

### **n. STROLLER AND SCOOTER PARKING**

We have space for folded strollers in the gated areas on Grove. We will not be responsible for strollers that are left outside. We strongly recommend a stroller lock and please remember a stroller cover in inclement weather.

### **o. WHAT TO BRING DAILY**

Please send your child in weather-appropriate clothing and clothing that will not restrict their movement as we may be out of doors on any given day. We subscribe to the ideology that “there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing.” This means rainboots and “Tuffo” suit on rainy days. **Please send your child in clothing that is easy for them to remove and put on when they need to use the potty. Please note that our students engage with paint and dirt on a regular basis so please use your best judgment about what to send your child in.**

Please make sure that your child has shoes that are labeled with their names and ones that they can put on and take off by themselves. We recommend shoes be rubber soled and give support to the foot. Shoes with laces and tricky buckles should not be worn. Velcro, large buttons or zippers seem to work best in aiding children’s independence. We want them to build confidence in their ability to do things for themselves and this is a big piece of their building of independence. We are an “indoor shoes” community for children and adults alike.

**\* No flip-flops, open-back shoes, or open-toed shoes.**

Please make sure that your child has a clearly labeled backpack that fits them properly and they can carry on their own. Please send your child with a labeled water bottle. Extended day families are to send in a packed and separately labeled snack. Students will also provide a packed lunch if they are not participating in the school lunch program. If your child is not toilet-trained, please



send extra diapers for us to store in our classroom; we will let you know if they are running low on diapers. There is no need for wipes as we have them in our classroom. If you need special wipes for your child, please send them in.

**It is very important to label all clothes, shoes, water bottles and backpacks.**

## **p. EXTRA CLOTHING**

At the beginning of the school year and with each change of season, please send in a full set of spare clothes for your child that will fit into a gallon-sized Ziploc bag. This should include long and short sleeve tops, pants, underpants (if applicable) and socks. If your child is potty training, please provide several sets of underwear, bottoms, and socks. Please replace the spare clothing as it goes home and make sure everything is labeled.

Please bring a set of labeled indoor shoes for your child in the start of the year. These should be easy for your child to put on and take off themselves. When your child's feet grow, please remember to bring in bigger indoor shoes as well.

## **q. TOILET TRAINING**

Children-do not have to be toilet trained to enter our school though we do highly recommend children 3+ to begin their toilet training journey. We honor whatever schedule you have for toilet training your child. We do ask that if your child is toilet-trained / training, work with your child on learning how to push down and pull up their pants to start gaining independence on the toilet. We have both child-sized toilets and child-sized inserted toilet seat to facilitate training.

Students will be asked to either sit on the toilet before outdoor time and after lunch or their diapers will be checked. Diapers will be changed with children standing up as a way to facilitate their potty training and to foster more independence than lying on a diaper station.

## **r. SNACKS**

Students will be required to pack their own separately labeled snack. Extended day students will need a second labeled snack.

**Please do NOT send any choke-able foods such as but not limited to:**

- uncut cherry tomatoes/grapes
- carrot sticks
- Popcorn



- Large pieces of meat

**We do NOT serve sugar to students and ask parents to NOT pack:**

- Candy
- Juices
- Chocolate milk
- Chocolates
- Desserts

We are a **completely nut-free school** and a list of foods will be shared at the start of the year based on any food allergies.

## **s. LUNCH**

For students opting into our school lunch, wBees will provide a well-balanced-lunch daily, served family style by teachers. Families may opt out of school lunch at any time and for those that do not, please provide a packed lunch that is easy for their child to open with minimal assistance.

All lunches must be completely nut-free. We encourage families to invest in a lunchbox or reusable containers that their child can open with some assistance. Kindly pre-peel or cut items ahead of time so that your child can independently eat their food. We have the ability to refrigerate lunches or reheat if you let us know via Brightwheel. We understand that diet and nutrition are different for every family. In an effort to respect this, we do not allow children to trade or share one another's lunches. Please reference our list above of items that should not be packed in school lunches.

Lunch is a time of day during which we ask children to bring extra focus to a special area of Montessori - Grace and Courtesy. We encourage children to use table manners, converse with friends, and clean up after themselves. Our teachers sit with the students to model table manners and connect through conversation.

## **t. ALLERGIES AND FOOD SENSITIVITIES**

If your child has **allergies or food sensitivities of any kind please contact us for additional paperwork** before your child's first day of school. For children with life threatening allergies, asthma, and other issues such as seizure disorders will need to be documented on your child's health form. Please have your doctor create an action plan that will be shared with the Administrative team.

## u. NAPTIME

During naptime, children are expected to be able to rest on their cot in a quiet manner, allowing themselves and other children in the classroom a time to rest their bodies and for many children, fall asleep. If it will help your child to fall asleep, please send them with one soft toy.

For nap linens, we will provide a light blanket and a small sheet that can be easily stored at the school. We will send the blanket and sheet home at the end of each week and ask that it be returned freshly laundered the following week. We do not allow pillows during naptime.

For children that do not sleep, we will allow a quiet book during this time.

## v. OUTDOOR TIME

For the fall, one of our major goals is to get the classroom to a point of community where we will abide by agreed-upon expectations and understand rules about safety in and outside of the classroom. We will practice walking with partners in the classroom, then onto the sidewalk, then around the corner, then around the block to walking and playing in the park. We will be using a walking rope and offering hands for those students who need them.

In the park, we will be modeling and reviewing certain expectations about the way we interact when out of doors in nature:

- We wear our colorful vests so that our teachers can see us easily and others will know that we are part of a group.
- We must always be able to see our teachers otherwise they will not be able to see us.
- We respond whenever we hear our name called.
- We stay within the boundaries set by our teachers.
- We line up ready to return to the classroom after our teachers clap to let us know it is time to go back to school
- We walk with calm and safe bodies while holding the rope

**\*It is of the utmost importance that children know how to be safe inside and outside of school. Please consistently work with your child on having them learn to hold onto your hand versus you hold onto them. Please practice walking in public spaces/your neighborhood with your child. Have your child learn to respond to their name and to practice transitioning out of the park with a 5 minute reminder.**



## w. ILLNESS

Please **do not send your child to school if they are sick**. A child should not come to school if they are too ill to participate in the day's activities or have any of the following: productive cough, runny nose, a temperature of 100.4 degrees or above, vomiting, diarrhea, conjunctivitis, head lice, or a rash that is not under treatment. If a sibling has a contagious disease such as Coxsackie, your wBees student should not come to school. A child who has a temperature or who has been experiencing diarrhea cannot return to school for 24 hours after the complete resolution of symptoms. If a child has been put on medication, they can return 24 hours after their last dose. A child who was ill but not placed on medication may return to school when they are not contagious and are able to participate in activities with comfort. A child who has been vomiting cannot return to school for a full 24 hours after the complete resolution of symptoms.

The NYC Department of Health requires that parents inform us within 24 hours of an absence for: chicken pox, conjunctivitis, diarrhea, diphtheria, food poisoning, hepatitis, haemophilus influenza type b infection, impetigo, measles, meningitis (all types), meningococcal disease, Methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), mumps, pertussis (whooping cough), poliomyelitis, rubella (German measles), salmonella, scarlet fever, tuberculosis or any disease or condition which may be a danger to the health of other children. If your child is known to have a contagious illness or lice please let us know. We will place a note on the main door stating which classroom(s) have been affected and we will follow up with an email to all parents in the affected classroom(s) so they can be on the lookout for symptoms of that illness. Early detection can prevent the rapid spread of certain illnesses and prevent many missed days of school.

If your child or anyone in your family has come in contact with COVID-19, we ask that you let us know immediately and we will let families know about the potential exposure. We will consult with the DOHMH for course of action regarding class or school closure, quarantine period, and sanitation. Please see our COVID plan below for more details.

## x. IMMUNIZATIONS

wBees Forest School is licensed and permitted by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and as such, **must enforce the School Admission Immunization Requirements Law**. **Parents who fail to comply with these regulations, or fail to provide us with appropriate documentation and up-to-date medical forms, may be withheld from the program**. Seedling children who have been accepted into the program but do not have the required immunizations to start will not be refunded any tuition. In accordance with state and city regulations, only medical exemptions are allowed; religious exemptions are



no longer supported in NYC. Supporting documentation would need to be provided to and approved by wBees prior to July 25th. Throughout the year, if your child's due for another round of vaccinations, we must get updated vaccination forms that reflect that your child is up to date as per the guidelines of the DOHMH. **Please note that students are required to have updated health forms for ages 2, 3, and 4 regardless of their vaccines.**

Children who are on a “delayed” vaccination schedule will need to meet the minimum requirements for vaccinations and will be required to provide a plan that has been created by their doctor and approved by the school. Families with children on a delayed vaccination schedule will be responsible for meeting the deadlines on the plan.

## **y. EMERGENCY HEALTH CARE**

- If a child becomes injured or ill, the parents will be notified. If a parent is unavailable the emergency contact given by the parent will be notified. Ill children need to be picked up within 30 minutes of the call.
- If the child needs to go to the hospital, an ambulance will transport the child to the hospital. A teacher will accompany the child and messages will be left with the child's parents, as well as the emergency contact, detailing the incident or injury as well as where the child is being transported.
- In case of minor injury, first aid will be administered, and the parent will be notified.
- A first aid kit is taken to the park each day. A teacher trained in first aid and CPR is on staff at all times. There will be two non-child specific Epipens on-site at all times.
- wBees staff are not certified to administer medication, oral or topical even if the parent requests it. Children are not allowed to self-administer medication onsite as well. wBees staff can only administer medicine if it is a life-saving intervention.

## **z. DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Maria Montessori developed the concept of “normalization” to describe the process by which each child acquires certain personality characteristics that lead to success in the classroom and throughout life. A “normalized” child will love learning, be kind to others, develop concentration and good work habits, and become independent. Our goal is to create and maintain an environment in which each child can successfully reach this level of normalization.

Student discipline at wBees means helping students attain self-control, teaching them to deal constructively with their feelings, and guiding them to respect the right of others to enjoy a peaceful and productive work environment. Students are encouraged to report to an adult if they observe another student/ students negatively impacting the physical or psychological safety of other students.

Adults should speak consistently in a clear, respectful manner to children and to each other, thus modeling the kind of language children need to learn in order to express themselves and to resolve conflicts.

Adults **MUST** intervene if they observe a student/students:

- negatively impacting the physical or psychological safety of others;
- disturbing others by their actions or words;
- disrupting or destroying the environment for others.

Normalization of the classroom begins with the modeling of the appropriate behavior by the teacher combined with a high level of respect for each student. Many discipline problems can be avoided by the following strategies practiced in every wBees Forest School classroom.

- Provide a structured Montessori-inspired environment in which a child feels secure and comfortable in his/her work
- Monitor student work and behavior closely
- Engage and interest the student
- Involve and stimulate the student
- Plan classroom procedures and rules carefully and in detail with the participation of the students
- Systematically teach students procedures and expected behaviors
- Redirect a child and use conflict resolution techniques immediately, when necessary
- Organize instruction to maximize student task engagement and success.
- Work one-on-one with children who need additional guidance
- Communicate directions and expectations clearly.





The effective teacher emphasizes prevention rather than remediation in classroom management. The teacher systematically approaches teaching by planning and preparing well in advance; setting expectations and teaching the procedures, routines and standards of behavior at the start of school and reteaches as necessary; and maintains these through prompt and consistent reinforcement of appropriate behavior by providing appropriate, well-prepared lessons and activities that engage learners.

If a student has difficulty following the rules of the community, the response will be age-appropriate. Personal attention, distraction, substitution and/or removal from the situation are typical approaches. Many instances resolve themselves as the student, within the bounds of safety and common sense, experiences the logical consequences of his actions (i.e. wiping up after throwing a paint can on the floor.)

If the student disregards the rules of the classroom community, the teachers will seek the underlying causes in order to help the student understand the inappropriateness of his/her actions and to find a constructive alternative. If such behavior occurs repeatedly, the teacher may request the Director, and/or other classroom teachers to observe and offer consultation before the parents are contacted for their support and cooperation.

The following are some guidelines of wBees discipline that parents should seek to apply at home as well as at the school:

- Hold the child to a standard; they will rise to expectations
- Behavior: think satisfaction and motivation vs. gratification and manipulation
- Make reward internal not external
- To maintain strong, effective discipline, seek consistency and clarity
- Catch children “doing something right”
- Engage and interest the child
- Involve and stimulate the child
- Redirect the child from destructive, negative behavior
- Be respectful
- Use humor to defuse, not to deflate
- Let natural consequences flow from inappropriate behavior.

While individual classroom rules will vary based on the student’s yearly renditions, many rules are universal and long-term.

#### wBees Standards of Behavior AT ALL TIMES

- Respect yourself, others and our environment
- Demonstrate responsibility, respect, and self-restraint
- Keep the wBees Forest School environment clean and orderly
- Keep hands to yourself



## Classrooms

- Treat all classroom materials with great respect and care
- Return all things to their proper place

## Outdoor Time

- Teachers on outdoor duty must be visible to children on the playground. They must position themselves around the playground and avoid standing in clusters. Any activity that is deemed unsafe by an adult on duty should be addressed immediately. Adults have the final say with any and all issues that pertain to safety. Our goal is to develop appropriate social behaviors in all of our students.

## Children who endanger other children

At wBees, one of our primary goals is to provide a safe, nurturing, and pleasant environment for all of the children we serve. We recognize that one of our jobs is to help children learn appropriate ways to handle conflicts. We work on this as conflicts arise, helping children find satisfactory solutions. We understand that many preschoolers may use misguided behavior because they have not yet learned what it is acceptable behavior. However, at times a child's behavior may endanger others. We want to ensure parents that we will address such behavior immediately following these guidelines:

- A first incident will be reported to the parent.
- A second incident will result in a parent-teacher phone call to discuss the behavior and establish some understanding of how the behavior is addressed at home and for a collaborative approach between home and school.
- A third incident will result in the parent being called in for a conference to meet with the teacher to discuss behavior and results of the action plan to be implemented inside the home and at school.
- Any further incidents will result in another conference will be set up with the teacher(s) and the director to continue the discussion to understand what might be causing the problem. Referral for outside advice may be suggested.

## aa. PROTOCOL FOR HELPING STUDENTS OF CONCERN

Any concerns about a student's performance or behavior are best addressed in partnership with the parents or guardians. Faculty members having concerns about a child should inform the appropriate program head, in writing, of their observations and questions. After careful collaboration, this team can then determine the steps that need to be taken. Parents must be informed of concerns at the earliest possible time, but never before a discussion takes place with the respective program head, who will then inform the Administrative Team. Frequently, a faculty member is the best person to share concerns with parents, but it may also be determined that the Administrative Team should be party to the conference in order to communicate in the most effective manner.

From time to time it becomes necessary to take a closer look at a student who struggles with academic, developmental or social issues in a way that does not seem typical to his or her parents or teachers. In order to ensure the most thorough, consistent, and sensitive observations and interventions, we follow this protocol as closely as possible:

Parents bring their concerns to their child's teacher, or a teacher observes behavior of concern in a child's academic, developmental or social functioning in school over a period.

Teacher(s) observe and document behavior of concern and confer with the Administrative Team and with parents, on ways to help the child manage his or her difficulties.

After formal and informal observations by several staff members take place, they will compile a list of "talking points." This process takes no longer than two weeks. A conference is requested with an appropriate combination of the child's parents, teachers, Administrative Team at which:

- a. school personnel share results of in-school findings;
- b. parents communicate their reactions and questions;
- c. the Administrative Team make recommendations, which may include:
  - i. speech therapy;
  - ii. occupational therapy
  - iii. art therapy
  - iv. play therapy
  - v. counseling;
  - vi. outside testing;
  - vii. sessions with outside learning specialist;
  - viii. accommodations/modifications
  - ix. a full evaluation

Parents have an agreed upon time to implement the recommendations, and it is critical for all parties to follow through in a timely fashion on the decisions made for the child's benefit. There will be follow-up calls or conferences as necessary until the targeted academic or social issues show improvement.

When a child is referred for an evaluation or for other outside services, faculty members are expected to work collaboratively with those specialists. No information about a child may be shared, orally or in writing, with persons or agencies outside the School without permission from the parent(s).

Through these techniques of modeling respectful language and behavior, clear setting and enforcing of goals and limits, and individualized response to difficulties, most children can be successful at developing self-control. Any persistent or serious problems should be brought to the attention of the program head immediately, then the parents, so that referrals can be made for appropriate outside guidance and/or evaluation.

## **bb. PARK SAFETY REQUIREMENTS**

wBees Forest School's model and philosophy is one that involves all of our children spending large parts of their day outdoors and in unbound public parks / spaces. We do not have an attached outdoor space so our children spend time walking around 10 to sometimes 20 minutes each way to and from our outdoor classrooms. Our students play, run, dig, climb, and play with natural materials such as rocks and sticks. **Due to the nature of our program, it is of the utmost importance that children are able to walk as a group and travel safely from indoor to outdoor classroom. This involves children being able to listen when their name is being called, follow guidelines of where it is safe to play, and when it is time to leave.**

We fully recognize that there is a learning curve with children learning to walk and travel with family members versus holding a rope and walking as a group with their classmates and we will work with your child to ensure their safety. This is a big part of the learning for the first month of school. We will designate extra staff and supports to help children practice outdoor safety. This also necessitates our families to work with their child on recall, adhering to safety guidelines, and practicing walking rather than being strapped / strolled around their immediate neighborhood.

In the case of an extremely challenging case after repeated interventions and resources for a specified period of time if a child's safety is in dire question, we will have a meeting with the family to discuss another educational environment for your child. This is considered an extreme and unique case and will only take place after repeated meetings and interventions have been put into place.



## **cc. MANDATED REPORTING AND CHILD ABUSE**

All teachers take a course in child abuse and neglect as part of their NYC DOH requirements. New York State law requires that any suspicion of child abuse or neglect be reported to a central hotline. This includes knowing the signs and symptoms of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. Staff are mandated reporters and are required to notify the director, call in child abuse reports to the State Central Registry by end of business day, and send in required follow up forms. Reports to the Department of Health will be made within 24 hours of the initial report.

## **dd. EMERGENCY PLAN**

wBees has an extensive emergency plan that can be viewed in the main office. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of the staff in the event of a disaster or other problems affecting the care or safety of children or staff. Efforts will be made to maintain childcare activities to the greatest extent possible in order to ensure that the needs and safety of the children will be met. The children and teachers also have monthly fire and evacuation drills and practice periodic sheltering in place techniques.

In the event of an emergency, please see our evacuation sites below. You will be contacted once we reach safety.

### First Evacuation Site

Site Name: Greater Ridgewood Youth Council (Fairview Location)

Site Address: 776 Fairview Avenue, Ridgewood NY 11385

Site Phone Number: 718-456-5437

Contact Name: Janine Mahon, Chief Operating Officer for Education

### Second Evacuation Site

Site Name: Forest Elementary School, PS 71

Site Address: 62-85 Forest Avenue, Ridgewood NY 11385

Site Phone Number: 718-821-7772

Contact Name: Ciro LaBarbera, Assistant Principal

### Fire Drills / Outdoor Safety Drills

wBees Forest School will practice outdoor safety drills on a monthly basis. The place of assembly will take place on the corner of St. Johns Road and Menahan Street. We will talk to children about the importance of the drills and the need to stay together and move quickly in case of a fire.

We will also be practicing indoor safety drills (sheltering-in and lock-down) drills throughout the year.



## **ee. SCHOOL CLOSURES**

wBees Forest School may close should the weather prohibit the safe arrival or dismissal of its students or staff, who may be traveling by bus, subway, car, or foot. wBees may also delay the opening of school or close school early should surrounding conditions require a change in the typical schedule. Parents will be notified of any closures or changes to the schedule via email as soon as the determination has been made. wBees will always follow the closures of the NYC-DOE though we are not limited to their days.

## **ff. BABYSITTING / TUTORING POLICY**

**We do not allow staff members to babysit or tutor students** while they are enrolled at wBees Forest School nor while they are teaching at wBees Forest School

## **gg. TUITION POLICY / LATE PAYMENT POLICY**

Our deposit and any tuition paid out are non-refundable (this includes days missed for quarantine, travel, snow days, or for illnesses).

The deposit will be applied to the final payment of the year.

We do not offer any makeups or any refunds for any reason.

The tuition is broken into quarterly payments of 5/1, 10/1, 12/1, 2/1 and 4/1. The deposit will be applied to the last payment of the school year.

There are no refunds for families leaving throughout the year for tuitions already paid as their spot is confirmed for the school year.

Tuition will be invoiced through Brightwheel.

If a payment is more than 15 days late, a late fee of \$25 will be enforced. If a payment is more than 30 days late, a late fee of \$50 will be enforced. Families who have not responded to make payment arrangements with the school within 45 days may forfeit their child's spot in the program with no refunds.

## hh. GRIEVANCE POLICY

Please bring any concerns you have about your child's teacher(s) to the attention of the Administrative Team. We will schedule a meeting with you to discuss your concerns and to establish a plan responding to your concerns. We will meet with the teacher(s) in question and follow up with a plan of action to address said concerns. The administrative team will observe and give feedback and support to teachers in how to address said situations when they arise in class. After a week, we will follow up with a phone call or meeting to see if any other concerns need addressing and continue to troubleshoot and work as a team to rectify any concerns.

We require that all of our staff members from Administrative team, teachers, to support staff be treated with respect at all times. If there is a grievance, we will always aim to communicate and problem solve but at no point will staff endure abuse from any family members or feel threatened in any way. We will always endeavor to problem solve but if it comes to light that there is an egregious breach in trust, we will initiate a dismissal process of the family without any refunds or recourse.

## hh. BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

In the Montessori classroom, we have a unique ceremony to celebrate the child's birthdate noting each year the earth has orbited around the sun. For the Birthday walk, we ask you to provide a photo of your child from birth and from each year of their life. Please reach out to your teachers a week or two before your child's birthday walk to arrange. We can allow up to two grownups to share in their child's special day.

Alternatively, we will take lots of photos to share with you. **Individually packaged, nut free, low-sugar treats can be shared; please inquire with your child's teacher whether there are any allergies or dietary restriction in the classroom.**

## ii. Staff Contact

### *Administrative Team*

Lanny Cheuck, Executive Director - [wbeesforestschool@gmail.com](mailto:wbeesforestschool@gmail.com)

Victoria Luzuriaga Bastidas, Head of School and School Psychologist - [victoriawbees@gmail.com](mailto:victoriawbees@gmail.com)

*Teaching Teams TBD in August*



*I have read the above Parent Handbook and understand that the policies as outlined will guide the safety and everyday protocols of the wBees Forest School. I am signing below in acknowledgement that I understand the policies in place and will abide by them.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Signature