

# Wauhatchie School Parent Handbook

## I. Forest Kindergarten History and Philosophy

**Forest School History:** Friedrich Frobel, a German educator, opened the world's first outdoor "kindergartens" (German for "children's gardens") more than 150 years ago. He believed young children should spend their time playing in nature and away from so much emphasis on learning letters and numbers. Today, across Europe, thousands of these "forest kindergartens" have been established where children spend their entire class time outdoors year-round.

**Our Philosophy:** Wauhatchie School is play-based and allows children to develop their skills and habits over time and at their own pace. Children learn naturally to be self-motivated, cooperative, respectful, grateful, and aware of their impact on the earth. Children experience outdoor adventures in all weather conditions. Wauhatchie School is made as safe as is reasonably possible, in order to facilitate children's risk-taking. It provides a complete immersion in nature helping to build a child's sense of place in the world.

Research strongly supports the idea that young children, particularly ages 2-6, learn best through direct experiences with the world around them. Being outdoors provides them with not only fresh air, but it also encourages imaginative play, creativity, hand-eye coordination and balance, physical strength and mental clarity. By tapping into their innate sense of wonder about nature, we can help children learn basic environmental and natural science principles, as well as respect for all living beings. Lessons flow organically from the natural rhythms of the seasons and from the children's daily discoveries. There are no set lesson plans: each day is shaped by the animals, insects, birds, amphibians, weather and foraging that is encountered, providing spontaneous teachable moments.

### Wauhatchie School Objectives:

- Provide young children the time, space and play to develop their fullest potential
- Provide opportunities for all activities to be child-initiated and child-led, with adults acting as facilitators
- Provide individual attention with a 1:5 teacher-to child ratio for ages 4-6 and 1:12 teacher to child ratio for ages 7-12
- Build children's on-going relationship with the land, to one another, and to themselves
- Provide opportunities to work collaboratively to create, problem solve, support one another, dream of a bigger and better world
- Encourage healthy habits and lifestyles
- Facilitate children's risk-taking, made as safe as is reasonably possible
- Increase motivation, self-esteem and concentration
- Develop respect for the natural world and also respect for its dangers
- Stimulate children's innate curiosity by being close to nature
- Teach children to become well informed and caring stewards of the natural world
- Encourage family involvement in nature-related learning on site and at their homes

## II. Staff Information and Curriculum Overview

**Teacher Qualifications:** All teachers have current First Aid and CPR certification. Lead teachers possess at a minimum, a Bachelor’s Degree. All teachers and substitutes have completed an interview process, background check and come with strong references from their previous employers.

**Curriculum Overview:** Wauhatchie School promotes a nature-immersion education, inviting the integration of literacy and mathematics into the students’ discoveries in the forest. We use an emergent curriculum model pioneered by Reggio Emilia practices. Curriculum is carefully and thoughtfully planned out based on observations and assessments of the children’s play, ideas, questions, and discoveries. Teachers incorporate reading, writing, mathematics, arts, and language into the daily happenings in the forest. Small teacher-child ratios allow one- on-one scaffolding to foster individual needs.

**Assessment:** Parents receive quarterly reports focused on whole-child development—how students are meeting academic learning standards, as well as social, emotional and physical development. Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled at least twice a year and as needed throughout the school year.

**Creating Community:** Wauhatchie School fosters collaboration among children, teachers, parents, and community. The parent is viewed as an essential resource to the child’s learning. The exchange of ideas between parents and teachers is vital in creating a more positive and productive learning environment. Wauhatchie embraces the Reggio Emilia vision of an “education based on relationships.” We aim to have a family centered program in which families feel welcomed and involved at Wauhatchie in order to support children’s reciprocal relationships with other children, family, teachers, society, and the environment. Wauhatchie holds several events throughout the school year for parents and family members to attend including seasonal family events and parent visitation days. We also welcome parent volunteers to assist in the classroom, upkeep, fundraising, and other items throughout the school year.

**Accreditation:** For the 2018-2019 school year Wauhatchie will conduct its program as a “Homeschool Tutorial.” This is a cooperative partnership between homeschool parents and teachers. Full day, full week Wauhatchie Forest Kindergarten parents will need to enroll their children as “homeschool students” with the state. You will find the link for further instructions below.

Homeschool Link: <https://www.tn.gov/education/school-options/home-schooling-in-tn.html>

### Staff Contact Information

Wauhatchie School Office		<a href="mailto:wauhatchieschool@gmail.com">wauhatchieschool@gmail.com</a> 423-242-3099
Jean Lomino	Director	jlomino@icloud.com
Megan Chaney	Assistant Director	mechaney27@gmail.com
Julie Lomino	Director of Admissions and Office Manager	julomino@gmail.com

1. **Parents can communicate with teachers using the Remind app. Join the Remind app by visiting [remind.com/join/wauhat](https://remind.com/join/wauhat).**

**Teacher Training and Research:** Wauhatchie School is a recognized site for Forest School teacher training and research. Trainees and researchers will always be accompanied by a WS staff member during their observations of children. Normal routines will not be disrupted.

### III. General Information

**Enrollment:** After meeting each other during the school tour parents, teachers and children need to feel confident that Wauhatchie School is the right fit. The Assistant Director will contact families within a week of the tour to answer any remaining questions and then either invite them to enroll or discuss any concerns that have arisen. If all spaces are full, parents will receive an email confirmation that their child has been placed on a waiting list.

Enrollment forms should be completed as soon as possible and emailed or mailed to Wauhatchie School along with the non-refundable \$100 deposit (the deposit may also be paid on Wauhatchie School's pay pal account.) This deposit will be applied to the first month's tuition payment. Please attach your child's immunization record or a religious exemption form. Your child's space in the class will be officially reserved as soon as all paperwork is turned in and the deposit check clears.

**Re-enrollment:** Children must be re-enrolled each year to ensure a spot at Wauhatchie School. The \$100 deposit does not apply to re-enrollment.

**Withdrawal:** Parents who wish to withdraw their child from Wauhatchie School must communicate directly with the Director. No refunds or credits will be given.

**Illness:** To control the spread of illness, children with vomiting, diarrhea, and/or fever should not be sent to Wauhatchie School until the child has been symptom free, without medication, for 24 hours. Should a child become ill while at school, parents will be contacted to pick up the sick child promptly. If a parent cannot be reached immediately teaching staff will call the next emergency contact to arrange pick-up.

**Dispensing medication:** It may be necessary for your child to receive medication while at Wauhatchie School. You will need to provide a signed authorization to allow teachers to administer medication, even non-prescription. Specific instructions regarding dosage, frequency, and symptoms of the condition for which the medication is administered should be listed on the authorization form signed by a parent. The medication should be labeled with the child's name. The Wauhatchie School staff member who administers the medication will document the time, the dosage, and any noticeable side effects.

**Academic Calendar:** Wauhatchie School will follow the Hamilton County Academic Calendar for all holidays. They will not follow the calendar for Hamilton County professional development days. Yearly schedules will be sent out via a Parent Newsletter prior to the beginning of a school year.

**Severe Weather Closings:** In the event of inclement weather, Wauhatchie School will make every effort to open as usual. This means that we will **NOT** follow Hamilton County weather delays and closings. We strive to provide opportunities for children to experience all types of weather in order to embrace the values of a forest

school. However to preserve the safety of our children and staff we will carefully assess the weather forecasts and close if conditions warrant such actions. It is at the discretion of the Wauhatchie School Director to make the decision to dismiss early, open late, or close. If the director decides to dismiss early, families will be notified via Remind 101 app.

In the event of delays or cancelations, a decision will be made by 7:30 a.m. and broadcast via the following outlets:

- Channel 3 WRCB
- Wauhatchie School Facebook page
- Remind 101 App

When warnings are issued for Hamilton County and the Chattanooga area for severe thunderstorms and/or tornadoes, Half-day Forest Kindergarten at Reflection Riding and at Lookout Lake will be cancelled if warnings are issued before 7:30 a.m. Afternoon Forest School will be cancelled if warnings are issued before 12:00 pm. Full-day Forest Kindergarten at Reflection Riding will remain open in the event of thunderstorms and/or tornadoes warnings. If warnings are issued during school hours, or heavy downpours and lightning occur, all children (both half-day and full-day) will be moved indoors until the threat is over. If it is apparent that the severe weather will continue throughout class time, half-day parents will be notified by group text to pick up their children early. We will also carefully monitor children's comfort level in cold temperatures and will move them indoors if they become too cold to enjoy their outdoor experience.

**Food:** Natural, organic and seasonal snacks are provided for Wauhatchie Forest Kindergarten students. Students enrolled in Forest School may bring wholesome snacks (no candy or processed foods, please.) Full day Forest Kindergarten students must bring their own wholesome lunch in a lunch box. Children will often eat outside.

**Food Allergies:** Teachers are aware of any allergies present in their class from the information provided on the emergency form. Teachers will not offer food to a child if it contains an ingredient that the child is allergic to and will notify the parent(s) ahead of time if a food is being served that a child cannot eat. Parents are responsible for providing alternate food for their child if the food served at school cannot be consumed due to an allergy.

#### **IV. Arrival and Pickup Policies**

All classes have sign-in sheets for tracking attendance. An adult will accompany each child on their walk from their car in the morning. No child may be left at school in the morning until they are signed in and the teacher is aware of their presence.

**Full-Day Forest Kindergarten** begins at 8:30 a.m. Parents and children should not enter the forest before 8:30 a.m. Should a parent arrive before that time, they may wait in their car until 8:30 a.m. Parents will walk their children to base camp where teachers will be waiting. Upon arrival children will participate in quiet time before starting their day in the forest. Children may engage in quiet observation, journaling, reading, etc.

**Half-day Forest Kindergarten** classes begin at 9:00 a.m. Parents and children should not enter the forest before 9:00 a.m. Should a parent arrive before that time, they may wait in their car until the class officially begins.

**Forest School for Home Schoolers** begins at 1:00 p.m. Parents and children should not enter the forest before 1:00 a.m. Should a parent arrive before that time, they may wait in their car until the class officially begins.

**Punctuality:** Because our classes are outdoors and hiking to our sites each day is a part of the daily activities, it is important that children arrive on time. If arrival time will be delayed, parents must call the teachers as soon as possible so alternate arrangements for meeting the group may be planned.

**After School Pick-up Policy and Procedures:** No child is ever released to an adult who is not listed on the emergency form without direct communication between the parent and teacher. Parents must sign out upon departure. An adult will accompany each child on their walk to their car after school. No child may be left at school in the morning until they are signed in and the teacher is aware of their presence.

**Aftercare:** Full-day Forest Kindergarten ends at 3:00 pm but parents may opt to enroll in aftercare. Parents must pick up their children by 3:10 p.m. unless enrolled in aftercare. Aftercare is offered from 3 to 5 p.m. Monthly tuition for aftercare is \$200. Parents who do not enroll their children in aftercare may notify teachers in advance if they occasionally need a late pickup time. Occasional aftercare tuition is \$10 an hour.

**Late Pick up Fee:** Children in our half-day Forest Kindergarten programs must be picked up by 12:10 p.m. Children in our full-day Forest Kindergarten program not enrolled in aftercare must be picked up by 3:10. Children in our full-day Forest Kindergarten program enrolled in aftercare must be picked up by 5:00. And children in Forest School must be picked up by 4:10 p.m. If a parent is late, they will be asked to sign a form indicating the time of pickup. Late pickup fees are \$10 for every hourly increment. A bill for late pickup fees will be sent to your home and payment is due within 30 days.

## V. Clothing and Gear List

### Clothing

Given that Wauhatchie Forest School embraces all seasons and all types of weather, it is **CRITICAL** that your child has clothes and gear that allow him or her to play comfortably. We adhere to the motto: There is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing choices. Below you will find a list of NECESSARY items as well as helpful tips and suggestions regarding clothing and gear.

We require that your child have the following items:

### Fall and Spring:

- Lightweight rain pants or quick-dry long pants: long pants rather than short pants are important to protect legs from thorns, insects, poison ivy etc. No denim jeans please.
- Rain boots with lightweight socks

- When temperatures are cooler: long-sleeved tops and/or rain jackets
- Sunhat
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent

**Winter: If there is snow or ice, no water play will be allowed.**

- Rain boots (with one or two pairs of socks)
- Full rain gear (hooded jacket and pants)
- Two-piece long underwear--silk or wool is best, but polyester is also a good choice.
- Silk or wool socks
- Mittens and a hat: wool or fleece is warmest.

**Year Round**

- Water bottle
- Small backpack
- Extra set of clothing. We have cubbies for each of the children at the camp shelter to contain a complete change of clothing in case they need warm, dry layers while outside. The complete change of clothing should include pants, underwear, warm socks, short-sleeved shirt, long-sleeved shirt, sweater or sweatshirt, warm hat and mittens. (If your child will be staying for the entire day, they will need an extra set of indoor clothing for the afternoon, to be kept at the school building.)

\*\*This list of required gear is subject to change. As the school year progresses and children's engagement with natural elements are monitored, teachers may add or change necessary items and gear that are optimal for children's activities.

\*\*We will have a fund for families who are in need of financial assistance in purchasing winter clothing. We will also hold a clothing swap at the beginning of each school year, so families who have purchased items can exchange sizes.

**Helpful Hints**

- Layering is key! Some days are 1-layer clothing days, some 2-layer days, some 3-layers. It is much easier to take layers off as needed than to warm a child that has already become chilled. The children's needs throughout the day are often unpredictable and will depend not only on the weather conditions but also the child's body temperature and activity level. In the winter, wearing 2 layers of wool long underwear underneath a thick wool sweater and fleece pants is the most effective way to layer children under their rain gear in order to keep them warm without feeling too bulky.
- We're going to get dirty! Please make sure you dress your children in clothes they can get messy.
- All clothing and footwear should be loose fitting and roomy to allow the body's own insulating layer to surround the skin.
- Pants are more comfortable for children when they have elastic waists instead of buttons or snaps. Please stay away from one-piece clothing such as snow bibs, as they can be problematic when using the bathroom.
- Please label everything with your child's name.

### Where to Obtain Gear

- There are many places to order soft wool products that are not itchy to sensitive skin. These can be purchased online by searching “wool” + any of these names/brands: A Toy Garden (also sells Puddle Gear), Janus, Engel, Ruskovilla.
- Some recommended brands for rain jackets and pants are Oakiwear and Columbia. Any rubber boots worn with warm socks will work during spring and fall, but insulated boots such as Bogs Boots are required during very cold weather.
- You don’t have to spend a lot of money on expensive wool sweaters. Any old woolen sweaters of larger sizes found at thrift stores can be ‘felted’ down to your child’s size by putting them in the washing machine and dryer. Also consider used or felted wool to make mitten liners (recommended under the Puddle mittens) and thick wool pants.

### Maintaining your gear once it is really wet and muddy:

- Rain gear can go in the wash by itself when you get home on the rinse cycle (without soap - to preserve the waterproofing a little longer), and then either drip dry or put it in a low-heat dryer cycle. Jackets may be slightly less muddy than pants, so you may get a few days of wear out of them before needing to rinse them.
- ‘Tear Aid’ is a product that Puddle gear recommends for maintaining raingear. This product is much more effective than duct tape in the long run (duct tape gets gummy), but for a short-term fix, duct tape works in a pinch.
- Kookaburra or Eucalan wool wash products protect the lanolin in the wool that maintains the warm when-wet properties. When aired out at night, wool does not hold odors and when worn under other layers, only needs to be washed every few weeks.
- If you purchase your pair of Bogs boots from REI, they will take them back if damaged and give you a new pair.

## VI. Child Safety Guidelines

### General Forest Rules

- **No Toys:** Nature provides all the materials necessary for playing in the outdoors, so toys from home are not necessary. Art supplies and other learning materials will be provided.
- **Boundaries:** Children are expected to stay within the boundaries that have been established by teachers.
- **Climbing trees:** Children may climb trees at school while under adult supervision. They may not climb higher than twice their height and only after they have demonstrated competence.
- **Sticks:** The children may not play with sticks that are longer than their arm, unless it is clearly and responsibly being used as a walking stick, a tool (digging, for example), or for building, under the supervision of the teachers. Running is not permitted while holding a stick.
- **Ingestion:** Children will not eat or drink any substance found in nature without teacher permission.

We are committed to keeping our children safe. We adhere to the following guidelines to provide consistent boundaries in the name of safety. We ask that parents uphold these same standards while onsite as well as at school events outside of regular school hours. It is also helpful to reinforce many of these practices at home.

**Physical Safety:** The children are always within eyesight and earshot of an approved adult. The maximum teacher child ratio for outdoor classes is 1:5 for Forest Kindergarten and 1:12 for home school classes. Each class stays together in designated areas specific to each portion of the day. The only people that interact with the school children during the day are preapproved by the faculty and are never alone with the children. Teachers carry emergency forms and an official first aid kit at all times. There are always two or more adults onsite at all times.

- **Site Assessment:** The sites and structures are checked for safety each morning before the children arrive at school.
- **Fire Safety:** Children are only in the presence of fire while under supervision of their teacher(s). Although a child may be invited by a teacher to help tend a fire, they are given very specific instructions based on their age and ability to discern a safe distance. They will help to collect and haul firewood, but the teachers are always in charge of adding fuel to the fire. There is always direct adult supervision when children are in the vicinity of fire or hot coals.
- **Water Safety:** All visits to the creek and pond are under full supervision of the teachers. Children will be allowed to wade in water that is less than knee deep while wearing boots, and they will be allowed to stand at a safe distance to the edge of the waterfall pond.

**Social & Emotional Safety:** As naturalists we are committed to inspiring and teaching respect for the earth and all its creatures and this includes modeling and fostering respect for self and for others at all times. Outdoor learning provides many opportunities for cooperative play and teachers are there to guide children into co-creative adventures. There is a zero tolerance policy for hitting, grabbing, pushing, name-calling, aggressiveness or any other demeaning behavior. If these behaviors occur, the teacher will separate the instigating child from the group to a calm place for a one-on-one discussion. Should the behavior in question not shift in a timely manner, the parent will be called to take the child home, or if the child is enrolled in the childcare program, the child will be taken to the school building for the remainder of the class. Recurring instances of disruptive behavior will result in a parent-teacher conference to implement a behavior plan. We will work as a team to support each child to ensure a successful experience at Wauhatchie School.

**First Aid at School:** In the case of a minor injury, the teachers may administer basic first aid—wash the injury with soap and water and cover with band-aids—as they see fit. The parents will be notified of any significant injuries at pickup (or after school via phone call if the child is picked up by another adult). In the case of a major injury, the teachers will call 911 and the parents/emergency contact and apply basic first aid until medical help arrives. All teachers have easy access to First Aid kits at all times. Children will always be sent to the nearest hospital if such extreme measure is needed.

**Bathroom Safety:** The bathroom area consists of both a designated outdoor space (chosen to allow for privacy but located within earshot of a teacher) as well as an indoor toilet facility. The teachers are located so that they can hear the children and are available to help when needed. If a child needs assistance using the bathroom, the teacher that helps is close enough to the other children and teachers that they are not “alone”

with the child since they are in proximity to and within earshot of others. The bathroom door is not closed while a teacher is physically assisting a child in that space, but may be closed for privacy when the child is in there alone while the teacher waits outside the door.

**Emergency Evacuation:** In the unlikely case that we would need to evacuate the property all parents would be notified via phone call of the destination.

Although we wish to be able to serve all children that come to our school, we will not allow the health and safety of the class to be compromised. We do take any intimidating behavior seriously and recognize that it makes a deep impact upon others. Our teaching philosophy holds the dignity of each child at its very core. Our curriculum inherently supports empowerment, teaches judgment, honors boundaries, values intuition, increases awareness, models clear communication and encourages healthy expression of all feelings. Thank you for contributing to the safety of our children and our community by modeling the types of behavior that we want to encourage in the children.

## **VII. Wauhatchie School Behavior Plan**

A very important part of the preschool and kindergarten experience is helping children learn how to get along in the world, enjoy being with other children, and follow the direction of an adult other than their parent. A caring and positive approach will be taken regarding behavior management and discipline. The teachers will focus on the positive behaviors of the children and reinforce those behaviors as often as possible. Our goal is to help the children develop self-control and responsibility for their actions.

### **Discipline Strategies**

1. Encouraging children to use their words when having a disagreement with another child.
2. Facilitating children in their attempts to settle their own disputes.
3. Redirecting behavior when this seems potentially effective.
4. Separating a child from the group
5. Counseling children individually about their behaviors.
6. Making parents aware of disciplinary concerns (Incident Report).

### **Disruptive Behaviors**

The following behaviors distract from the full benefit of the program and will result in consequences.

- Requires constant attention from the staff
- Inflicts physical or emotional harm on other children, adults, or self
- Disrespects people and materials provided in the program
- Consistently disobeys the rules of the classroom
- Verbally threatens other students and/or staff
- Uses inappropriate or offensive words repeatedly

### **Plan for Disruptive Behavior**

#### **Step One: Incident Report**

Disruptive behaviors will be addressed in an incident report. This will be completed by a teacher to document inappropriate behaviors that directly impact other children, staff members, or the group as a whole. This report will be shared with the parent and will explain the behavior and how the behavior has affected others. It will also explain how the situation was resolved. The incident report will be given to the parent at the end of the day to be signed and returned the next day to the teacher.

#### **Step Two: Parent/Teacher/Director Meeting**

If two incident reports are written during one week, documenting that the child has difficulty managing his/her behavior on a recurring basis, parents will be asked to meet with the child's teacher and School Director.

**Step Three: Child may be sent home or be removed from the program**

If, after Steps One and Two, the child’s behavior continues to be inappropriate, consistently disruptive, and/or dangerous, it may be necessary for the child to be sent home for a time to be determined, or removed from the program altogether.

At Wauhatchie School, children will be taught the expectations for correct behavior and encouraged to live and act accordingly. When children know something is wrong, and choose to do it anyway, consequences will follow to communicate that the behavior is not acceptable and will not be tolerated in our school.

**Behavior Plan Agreement**

I have read the School Behavior Guidelines. I have discussed this with my child and agree to comply with the discipline policies and procedures of Wauhatchie School.

Child’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Legal Guardian Name Printed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent Handbook Agreement Form**

The Wauhatchie School Parents’ Handbook lists the values, policies, rules, and regulations of Wauhatchie School. Its purpose is to assure the smooth operation of our program. Reading and understanding this hand books is imperative to the operations of Wauhatchie School. By signing this form, you are agreeing to abide by these written provisions of Wauhatchie School.

I understand that my signature on this form binds me to observe the policies, rules, and regulations as set forth by Wauchatchie School.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name