

# Hedgehog Hill Forest Learning Cooperative

## Parent Handbook

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### **Welcome**

Welcome to Hedgehog Hill Forest Learning Cooperative.

Our program was created to give children the opportunity to slow down, explore the natural world, and develop confidence through meaningful outdoor experiences.

Located on a small woodland farm in Antrim, New Hampshire, Hedgehog Hill provides children with space to play, observe, and learn in connection with nature.

We believe childhood should include mud, trees, imagination, and time to explore the rhythms of the seasons. Our program encourages curiosity, independence, and respect for the natural environment.

We are grateful to the families who join us during the founding stage of this cooperative community.

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### **Pilot Program Season**

Hedgehog Hill Forest Learning Cooperative is beginning with a small pilot program as we continue developing the outdoor classroom and woodland learning areas on the property.

During this initial phase, the program operates as a small, home-based childcare environment with a strong focus on nature-based learning. Children will spend time both indoors and outdoors on the property depending on weather conditions and the stage of outdoor classroom development.

As the outdoor learning areas are completed, the program will gradually transition toward more fully outdoor days. This pilot phase allows families to help shape the program while we build the woodland classroom spaces and natural play areas.

Our goal is to create a calm, nurturing environment where children feel safe exploring nature, interacting with farm life, and building friendships.

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## **Program Overview**

Hedgehog Hill Forest Learning Cooperative is a small mixed-age program serving children ages 3–6.

The program is intentionally kept small in order to provide close supervision and meaningful engagement with each child.

Children participate in:

- nature exploration
- creative play
- seasonal activities
- outdoor observation
- farm awareness
- storytelling and imaginative play

Our program emphasizes play-based learning, cooperation, and respect for the environment.

## **Educational Philosophy**

Hedgehog Hill Forest Learning Cooperative draws inspiration from Waldorf education, classical learning traditions, and nature-based childhood development.

In the Waldorf approach, childhood is understood as unfolding in natural stages, and young children learn best through imagination, imitation, storytelling, and meaningful experiences rather than formal academic instruction. Our program emphasizes rhythm, creativity, and time outdoors, allowing children to develop confidence, curiosity, and a strong connection to the natural world.

The founder's background includes an interest in Christian mysticism and traditional storytelling. While Hedgehog Hill is not a religious program, stories shared with the children often come from nature-themed folklore and fairy tales from many cultures. These stories reflect timeless themes of kindness, courage, cooperation, and respect for the natural world.

Through daily immersion in nature, children naturally encounter patterns and relationships within the environment. Themes that may arise through observation, storytelling, and seasonal activities include the four elements, the directions and changing seasons, the rhythm of the year, and the traditional way of observing living things as belonging to the mineral, plant, and animal realms.

Our goal is not formal instruction, but to nurture imagination, wonder, and a deep appreciation for the rhythms of nature.

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## **Schedule**

Pilot Program Schedule:

Day: Wednesdays

Time: 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Children should arrive between 9:00–9:10 AM.

Prompt pickup at 1:00 PM helps maintain a calm transition for all children.

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## **Location**

Hedgehog Hill is located on a 2-acre woodland property with small farm animals in Antrim, New Hampshire.

Children may observe chickens, goats, pigs, or other animals as part of the natural farm environment. Indoors we have a bunny, a turtle and cats.

All animal interaction is supervised.

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## **Daily Rhythm**

While the exact activities change with the seasons, a typical morning may include:

Arrival and free play

Morning circle/story

Outdoor exploration

Nature play and seasonal activities

Snack or lunch break

Creative play or quiet time

Closing circle and pickup

We allow the rhythm of the day to remain flexible to follow children's curiosity and the natural environment.

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## **Outdoor Learning**

Spending time outdoors is an important part of our program.

Children will go outside whenever weather conditions allow. Outdoor experiences may include:

- nature walks
- building with natural materials
- climbing logs and exploring trails
- observing animals
- seasonal crafts and activities

Outdoor play supports children's physical development, creativity, and emotional resilience.

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## **Clothing Requirements**

Proper clothing is essential for children to be comfortable outdoors.

Children should arrive with:

- Waterproof boots (muck boots recommended)
- Waterproof outer layer (rain suit such as Oakiwear)
- Weather-appropriate layers
- Change of clothes
- Water bottle
- Lunch or snack from home

- Child-safe bug spray if desired

Please label all items.

Children who are not dressed appropriately for outdoor conditions may not be able to participate fully in outdoor activities.

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### **Weather Policy**

We believe children benefit from experiencing the changing seasons.

The program typically operates in:

- light rain
- snow
- cool temperatures

The program may cancel for:

- severe storms
- dangerous winds
- extreme temperatures

Families will be notified if weather conditions require cancellation. We will follow the local district in school closings for road safety.

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### **Illness Policy**

Children should remain home if they have:

- fever
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- general illness
- significant cold symptoms

Children should be symptom-free (without fever reducing medication) for 24 hours before returning.

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## **Farm Safety**

The Hedgehog Hill property includes small farm animals.

Children are taught to:

- respect animals
- move calmly around animal areas
- follow adult instructions

All animal interaction is supervised.

Children wash hands after animal contact.

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## **Behavior Philosophy**

Our program supports children in learning respectful behavior and problem-solving.

We guide children through:

- conflict resolution
- cooperative play
- understanding boundaries
- expressing emotions appropriately

We do not use punitive discipline. Instead, we focus on redirection, communication, and modeling respectful behavior.

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## **Payment**

### **Sliding Scale**

We believe nature-based education should be accessible to families from many economic backgrounds. For this reason, Hedgehog Hill Forest Learning Cooperative offers a community sliding-scale tuition model.

Families choose a tuition level within the range that best reflects their financial situation. Those who are able to pay at the higher end help make it possible for other families to participate at a lower rate.

This system is based on honesty, trust, and a shared commitment to making nature education available to our community.

### **Pilot Program Tuition**

Wednesdays 9-1

\$30 - Supported rate

\$40 - Standard tuition

\$50 - Community supporter rate

Families are invited to choose the level that best reflects their financial situation.

Tuition helps support program supplies, insurance, and program development.

More community-supported spots/scholarships may be available as funding allows.

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### **Photo Policy**

Photographs may occasionally be taken for program documentation or promotional purposes.

Parents may indicate whether they give permission for photographs of their child to be used on the website or social media.

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### **Emergency Procedures**

Staff maintain basic first aid supplies and emergency contact information.

In case of emergency:

- parents will be contacted immediately
- emergency services will be called if necessary

The nearest medical facility will be used if urgent care is required.

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### **Communication**

We believe communication between families and educators is important.

Parents are welcome to:

- ask questions
- share concerns
- discuss their child's experiences
- volunteer

Program updates may be shared through email.

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### **Registration**

**Please sign a copy of the parent handbook in addition to the enrollment form and liability waiver. All three are on the registration and enrollment forms tab once you log in to our portal.**

**Please reach out if you have any questions!**

**Amy - [Hedgehoghillforest@gmail.com](mailto:Hedgehoghillforest@gmail.com)**

**We are looking forward to meeting you all!**