



DULUTH FOREST
KINDERHAUS

Parent Handbook

2021-22 School Year

Nature-based primary education for children ages 3-5

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Licensed by the Minnesota State Department of Human Services

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Welcome to Duluth Forest Kinderhaus!

Kinderhaus is a Reggio-inspired forest preschool program in Duluth, MN that gives primary-age students the opportunity to have the time and space to learn in the natural world - a throwback to how childhood used to be! My own childhood was spent letting my imagination run wild in our back field, building bike jumps in the dirt patch across the road, hiking through the woods, racing sticks down our rainy road, sledding down the neighbor's hill, helping my parents garden, and creating thousands of different play schemes that only my siblings, friends, and I would understand.

Our lives as human beings have changed, but the developmental needs of kids have not. Whereas children used to play outside after school, all evening, and all summer long, schedules and busy lives have taken over. Modern life is what it is. Why not allow children to have these experiences while at school and have those needs met the way we did?

- Erin Kinney, Founder of Cedarsong Nature School -

Among academically-driven curriculum, adult-directed schedules, and short periods of free outdoor play, young children are missing out on the fundamentally necessary function of movement and play during their primary years. We even see this push for academics in preschool programming. As Maria Montessori so truthfully stated, "Play is the work of the child". The rise in stationary work pushes against the movement young children crave and need for neurological function. It is necessary for us, as educators, to take a step back and remember how important play and hands-on exploration is in early childhood. We need to consistently ask ourselves, "what are we doing? why are we doing it? who is it for?"

Higher level thinking occurs when children play freely, and given the time to do so, provides them the opportunity to practice and develop these important skills. Given a place-based model, children thrive in an environment of endless opportunities. With plenty of research to back the importance of nature play, educating our young ones in this way develops an important connection to nature, their environment, and themselves.

In the last six years of teaching primary-age children in the outdoors, I have been able to see firsthand the genuinely positive effect it has on children; I have observed how impressive their thinking and logic is when they are given the time and space to figure it out for themselves; I have realized that these little beings are capable of way more than we give them credit for; I have experienced a significant decline in behavioral issues and increased focus on empathy and understanding the whole child; and finally, it has given me the opportunity to examine and develop my true teaching philosophy; one that I am honored to share at Duluth Forest Kinderhaus.

My role is multifaceted and flexible. I am a director, facilitator, and responsive educator, but also a learner and researcher, right alongside these mini scientists as they test the world. It is the children's natural curiosity that shapes the way I teach - a welcome departure from traditional education.



Be well and shine on!

Amber Marsolek, M.S.Ed.

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HOW DOES A NATURE-BASED PROGRAM WORK?

This model is a form of primary education in which class is held mostly outdoors and uses our natural environment to tap into children's innate curiosity. All types of weather are appreciated while exploring, playing, and learning in a forest setting or natural environment. Inspired by the original Waldkindergartens of Germany, Kinderhaus strives to use the wild outdoors to build resilience, inquiry, and confidence.

ABOUT OUR PROGRAM

As a pre-kindergarten program, we serve 3- to 5-year old children. Children must be 3 years of age before the first day of school and fully potty trained. Kinderhaus is designed as a program to prepare students for entrance into any subsequent traditional or alternative kindergarten program. This program is also a great alternative for those early 5s that would thrive on an extra year before entering kindergarten.

Kinderhaus follows the expectations set out by the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress. The capability of these young ones is beyond what we can imagine given the time and space to work at their own pace.

I have met the licensing requirements by the State of Minnesota and Kinderhaus is licensed by the Department of Human Services under a Class C-2 license. This license allows me to care for up to 12 school-age children. A copy of the licensing rule is available upon request. This policy outlines the policies and procedures I use in my program. Please keep this handbook as a point of reference throughout the school year.

Days and Hours of Operation

Kinderhaus will be open Monday-Friday from 8:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m. during the regular school year. Our school year runs from September 13, 2021 – May 27, 2022.

At this time, there is no before or after school care or summer programming available.

Holidays and Closures

Kinderhaus follows the Duluth Public School (ISD #709) school calendar, with the exception of several dates. As such, Kinderhaus will be closed when Duluth schools are closed due to severe weather. A text will be sent out to parents in the event of a severe weather closure and a note will be posted on our Facebook page.

Kinderhaus will be closed on the following holidays and breaks:

October 21-22	MEA Weekend
November 25-26	Thanksgiving Break
December 20-31	Winter Break
January 17	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
February 21-25	February Break
April 18-22	Spring Break

It is still possible that we may endure COVID-related closures throughout the school year.

Tuition

Our monthly tuition rates are as follows:

Full Time (Monday-Friday) \$800/month
Part Time (M/W/F) \$480/month
Part Time (T/Th) \$320/month

Tuition will be paid one month in advance, due on the 1st of each month, September-May.

Tuition is based on our school calendar which includes holidays, breaks, and professional development. **Tuition does not reflect the days of the child's actual attendance.**

You will receive an invoice for the following month's tuition (and any additional fees) a week in advance to allow ample time to pay. It is essential that you pay tuition by the 1st of each month. You may pay via automatic withdrawal through Brightwheel or by check or cash paid directly to Ms. Amber.

Fees

Bounced check: If a check is written for payment of tuition or fees and is not honored by the bank, a \$30 fee will be charged and payment must be made by cash only, within 24 hours.

Late payments: If the payment has not been received within five business days after the due date, a \$25 late fee will be assessed. For every day thereafter, a \$5 charge will incur. If payment is not made within 30 days, it will be considered delinquent and can be grounds for termination of the contract and school attendance. The account will then be turned over to a collection agency.

Late pick up: The end of our school day at Kinderhaus ends at 3:00 p.m. After 3:05 p.m., parents will be charged \$1 per minute they are late to pick up their child. The late pick up charges will be added to the next month's tuition invoice.

Termination

If for any reason, termination of attendance is required, whether on behalf of the director or the parents, a written notice will be required. Tuition for that month must be paid for the final month. Reasons for termination may include, but not limited to:

1. Failure to pay tuition or fees on time
2. Repeated failure to pick up child before closing time (3:00 pm)
3. If the needs of the child cannot be met by the teacher. In this instance, effort will be made to remedy any problems and attempt to offer support within the school setting. Recommendations will be made for other resources if we are not able to work out a solution.

Grievance Procedure

If any concerns arise during the school year, please bring it to my attention and we can schedule a time to meet and discuss. After our meeting, I will consider your concerns and notify you, in writing, of the final decision I make.

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURE

Duluth Forest Kinderhaus serves primary-age students. Children must be at least 3 years of age and fully potty trained by the first day of school.

Enrollment will open each February. Applications must be filled out in their entirety and mailed or dropped off per the instructions on the form. If your child has been placed, you will receive communication as such. Enrollment will be secured by a **non-refundable** \$100 deposit, which will be credited to their first month's tuition.

As all tuition is paid one month in advance, there will be no tuition due in June.

Subsequently, paperwork for your child's file and gear required must be submitted before the first day of school, include the following:

1. Admission and Arrangements Form
2. Policy Agreement Signature Page
3. Tuition Arrangement Contract
4. Insurance Coverage Statement
5. Immunization Record
6. Media Release
7. Permission to Administer Medications
8. Emergency Contact Forms
9. All About Me Form
10. Cultural & Family Traditions Form
11. Medication Permission Form
12. Travel & Activity Authorization

For subsequent enrollment years, selections will be made in order of the following criteria:

1. Returning students
2. Siblings of alumni families
3. Wait list families
4. General public

I do not discriminate in the admission of children in my child care program – everyone is welcome!

Before the start of the school year, time will be set aside for the parents, child, and teacher to meet and discuss policies, procedures, and needs of the child. We will set aside dates for a parent meeting and a separate play date for students to visit the space and meet new classmates.

WHERE WE LEARN

We are located on Martin Road, just outside of the Woodland neighborhood. The school is located on five acres of private land, two acres of which are for school use. Kinderhaus allows students a variety of learning environments:

Our nature playscape: This space was thoughtfully designed for and inspired by kids' movement, creativity, and inquisition. Students will move freely about, tending to what interests them several times during the day.

Our forest: This is the meat of our space; where all the good stuff happens. We will roam each day throughout our trails pausing at points of interest, including, but not limited to, our fire circle, climbing trees, and open forest gathering and play spaces.

Our covered patio: This space includes seating and workspaces to allow covered, open-air space for eating, storytelling, art, and exploration, especially on rainy days.

Our indoor classroom: The classroom is south-facing with plenty of windows to allow plenty of natural light. This is where we will hang our gear, gather, rest, and eat.

Our facility is a smoke and alcohol-free zone. Smoking is not allowed in or near our child care facility or on our property, according to Minnesota State Law.

I am required to be available for assistance and care for school-age children. I intend to be within sight or hearing at all times. School age children will only leave my property with your written permission.

Parking

Because Kinderhaus is located on residential property, a parking lot is not available for drop off and pick up. Rather, our long driveway should serve as plenty of space, if used properly, for parents to use. The City of Rice Lake has requested that parents do not back up or park on Martin Road as the busy nature of traffic poses a safety risk. Please follow the diagram below when you are arriving at Kinderhaus.

Please park on the left side of the driveway and use the right side for turning around and pulling out. Two additional parking spots are located at the very front of the driveway and on the right side of our turn around area. Please park smart! 😊

Arrival & Departure

For safety assurance, please walk your child to the front gate in the morning and to your car at the end of the day. Parents must check their child in with a teacher before they head off to play. Your child is your responsibility before they are checked in and after they are checked out each day. Any issues or injuries happening before or after these times are the parents' responsibility. Please be respectful of the property outside of our classroom as it is our family's home.

Upon arrival, place your child's lunchbox in the refrigerator and support your child in dressing in their gear for the day. Place snack in forest pack and walk your child and their pack outside to check in with a teacher.

We have set aside the time between 8-8:30 a.m. for drop off time, however, it is in your child's best interest to arrive closer to 8:00 a.m. (but not before) so they have time to settle in and play with their peers. At about 8:30 a.m., our day will start together and all parents should depart from the playscape. Understandably, saying goodbye to a parent in the morning can be difficult for a child and we will be available with reassurance as you head out. ☺

Outside Start: Please assist your child dressing in appropriate gear for outdoor play that morning according to the gear board. After they are dressed, please walk them out our back classroom door and meet us on the patio. It is expected that parents will give their child a quick goodbye, send them off to play, and head off for the day.

Our classroom is only accessible during school hours unless an appointment has been set up with Ms. Amber.

Lateness and Absences

If you are going to be late, please send a message via Brightwheel to notify of a late arrival or pick up.

If you are late, and we have not heard from you, we will attempt to contact you or your emergency contacts until someone has been notified that the child has not been picked up.

If your child is going to be absent for the day, please contact Kinderhaus as soon as possible. If your child does not arrive as scheduled, attempts to contact you will be made to check the whereabouts of your child.

HOW WE LEARN

We pride ourselves on meeting children with rich learning experiences wherein they feel they are a strong part of their journey. How we learn may look and feel differently than a traditional classroom.

Duluth Forest Kinderhaus uses an integrated approach. We thrive on seasonally-relevant themes, child-led interests, and Reggio-inspired emergent curriculum. Emergent curriculum evolves directly from what is relevant, interesting, and meaningful to the student(s). Using an inquiry-based teaching model, children are able to wonder and ask questions about discoveries and observations. It is then the job of the teacher to provide students with materials and hands-on explorative opportunities in order for them to form their own reasoning and theories. Through

interest-led, experiential learning, a deeper understanding takes place that is meaningful to the child. Additional activities are developed to build on what is inquired about during outdoor time.

Kinderhaus learner-centered assessments are aligned with the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress. Though these standards are not met through pre-planned lessons, students meet several cross-curricular standards simultaneously as nature provides multi-disciplinary opportunities. Our learning stories document children's inquiries and may include: quotes, pictures, questions, children's work, journal entries, art, and natural materials. These stories and posted documentation make our learning visible. Literacy, Math, Art, Science, and other curricula are all integrated within an outdoor learning model.

Conferences: Opportunities for fall conferences are scheduled for October 18-20 and spring conferences are scheduled for April 13-15. Conferences are optional. You are welcome to set up a conference anytime during the year if you feel there is something significant that needs to be discussed. *Depending on COVID-related circumstances, these may take place via Zoom.*

Communication: We use the app Brightwheel for communication, payment, and pictures. This application will share our ongoing notes and pictures on a continuous basis.

Though allowing unstructured play is key to our program, giving students a rhythm to our day is just as important. Having flow in our day provides predictability that gives children a sense of security.

Sample Daily Schedule

Routine is important for children, but please understand the nature of our learning requires a flexible schedule.

8:00-8:30 a.m. Flexible drop-off outside in playscape and free play (Parents make sure child's forest pack has water bottle, extra clothing & snack.)

8:45 a.m. Travel to campfire circle [group time could include: greeting, daily poem, weather, and songs]

9:00 a.m. Free play in forest

9:45 a.m. Flexible snack and bathroom opportunities - - continued forest time [hiking, exploration, play, etc]

11:00 a.m. Forest check-in [story, dramatic play, journals, puppets, song, etc]

12:00 p.m. Return to outdoor classroom, handwashing, journal recap and monthly picture

12:15 p.m. Lunch (outdoors, unless weather does not allow)

12:45p.m. Group story

1:00 p.m. Choice time (Enrichment & Maker's Space)

2:00 p.m. Free play in playscape

2:30-3:00 p.m. Flexible pick-up in playscape

Enrichments to be offered in the afternoon could be any of the following: art, cooking, music, storytelling, yoga, constructing, experiments, gardening, etc.

Field Trips

We will be taking periodic field trips to a local natural areas. Our field trips will give both part-time groups of students the opportunity to partake. Locations and details will be provided with plenty of advanced notice. We feel so fortunate to live in an area that is prolific with trails, varying waterways, and parks. As experiencing different environments provides a rich learning experience, these field trips are an important part of our curriculum.

Parents will be responsible for drop-off and pick-up on location for field trip days. We tested this model last year and found it to be the most efficient way for us to travel as a group. Field trip permission slips will need to be signed in order for the child to attend.

Parents are welcome to come along on our dogsledding field trip in January and will need to provide own transportation and will not be allowed to transport other children.

Transportation

I have taken the transportation safety training and am able to transport children in my care. If I transport your child, I will require written permission from a parent or guardian to transport the child.

Media

Children are exposed to screen time more than ever. I strongly believe there is a time and place for screens and should be very limited at the primary age. Though we do not include computers or TV in our daily routine, an occasional brief video clip to illustrate and expand upon something we may be wondering about would be appropriate.

The Good Stuff

This is the section to get excited about and what sets us apart from traditional classrooms.

Getting Dirty: Nature play lends itself to dirty, muddy, mucky, wet play. Children may feel hesitant at first to feel comfortable about this, but they will be assured that it is ok at school.

Stick Play: Sticks may be one of nature's most versatile play things! It can be used as a microphone, magic wand, sword, walking stick, mixing spoon, or even a shooter. It is important that children feel comfortable to let their imaginations run wild, but it is also important to me that all children feel safe and welcome. We take time at the beginning of our school year to discuss safe ways to use sticks and how they should be used around peers. We guide students to use them in safe, appropriate ways.

Bare feet: Running, climbing, and playing in bare feet give children important sensory input their bodies need. Students will be allowed to be barefoot within our playscape as long as the temperature is safe to do so. However, anytime we leave our playscape, appropriate footwear will be required.

Campfires: We have a fire ring in our forest area that we will use seasonally to enjoy the warmth on chilly days and learn to cook over. The children will learn about fire safety and appropriate behavior around the campfire each time before the fire is lit. I will closely monitor campfires to make sure all children are safe.

Resting Time

Though we do not have a scheduled rest time, our time after lunch spent in enrichment or the Maker's Space is a mellow moment in our day. Children are also welcome to use their yoga mats or hammocks during afternoon free play if rest is needed.

Behavior and Discipline

Behavior guidance is an important way to instill limits and respect at this age. It is important to us to help them understand that everyone makes mistakes and that we learn from them. We are all learning and growing in a non-threatening environment including the following methods:

- modeling positive interactions
- using mistakes as learning experiences
- connection as redirection
- taking a break alongside the group to cool down and rejoining when ready
- following up as a group to learn a whole class lesson

Punishment style of discipline does not build confidence, bring forth change, or help a child learn how to regulate their own behavior. Our intended purpose at Kinderhaus is to give children the opportunities to practice positive behaviors that will set them up for the future. Conflict, negotiation, and resolution are all very necessary steps for children to take in order to develop positive conflict resolution skills. Luckily, outdoor play gives children many opportunities to practice these important life skills.

Conflict is not the same as aggression. If a child's behavior is dangerous or destructive, the teacher will intervene to provide safety to the class and environment. Time will be taken to help the child understand how his/her behavior impacts the people and property around them. Children at the primary age are still learning the realm of their energy and strength and it is our job to help guide them through that. Parents will be notified of ongoing behavior issues or extreme behaviors that are hurtful to others or our learning space.

WHAT WE NEED TO LEARN

"There is no bad weather. Only bad clothing."

Clothing and Gear

At Kinderhaus, appropriate clothing is key to comfortability and success of our students. Because our program is mostly based outdoors, the following gear is necessary and provided as follows:

Provided by Kinderhaus (items stay at school)

Rain pants & jackets

Fleece-lined rain suit (new this year!)

Base layer mittens

Waterproof mittens

One-piece snowsuits (new this year!)

Neck gaiter

Snowshoes

Forest Pack

Planetbox Lunch Box (goes home at the end of year)

Class t-shirt (goes home at the end of year)

Provided by Family per season (you are welcome to leave whatever gear at school to cut down on transporting back and forth)

We have tried and tested many brands of waterproof boots over the years and have found Kamik Snobuster boots to be the warmest (with wool socks) and most waterproof boots out there. For this reason, providing your child with a pair of these specific boots is required.

Layering is key to making sure your child is comfortable throughout the day! The following are what we would prefer your child to be dressed in depending on the weather:

Fall & Spring (September, October, April, May)

- + Lightweight to midweight merino wool, calf-length socks
- + Warmer days – comfortable pants and layered long-sleeve over a short-sleeve shirt, sun hat, close-toed tennis shoes
- + Cooler/rainy days – lightweight to midweight merino wool long underwear; no jeans, lightweight to midweight fleece jacket or sweater, fleece pants, knit hat, puddle boots

Winter (November, December, January, February, March)

- + Midweight to heavyweight merino wool, calf-length socks
- + Midweight to heavyweight merino wool long underwear as base layer.
- + Midweight to heavyweight fleece sweater and pants as insulation layer.
- + Snow mittens – preferably ones that pull up over the jacket sleeve
- + Turtle Fur neck gaiter
- + Balaclava for subzero days
- + Warm winter hat

Other classroom items to send with your child:

Yoga mat

Water bottle (preferred brands include: Camelbak, Klean Kanteen, Hydro Flask, Life Factory. Must have a flip up mouth piece or sport cap with pull up mouth piece.)

Your child will need two complete changes of clothes in a bag on the top shelf of your child's locker. Please replace used extra clothing by the start of the next day. PLEASE label all of your child's clothing and gear to avoid lost items.

Toys from Home

Please refrain from sending any toys from home. These extras tend to be a distraction and we have everything we need for a fun, enriching day right in our backyard!

NOURISHMENT

Lunches

Lunches need to be brought from home on a daily basis. We are pleased to provide our kiddos with a Planetbox Lunch Box to encourage a package-free, healthy lunch. Our refrigerator will be

available to store lunches. Reheating food will not be an option, but thermoses work great for soups or leftovers! Make sure your child's lunchbox is labeled with his or her name to assure each child consumes the intended foods.

Water Bottles

Kinderhaus will wash and refill water bottles on a daily basis. Water intake is very important for these active, little bodies. Please label your child's water bottle with his or her name to avoid the cross-contamination of germs with fellow classmates.

Snacks

Morning snacks will need to be provided from home. We will allow children to self-serve their own snack during our forest time.

Due to the ending of our day at 3:00 p.m., if you would like your child to have an afternoon snack, it must be included in their lunch box. Time will be allowed for children to enjoy this snack in the afternoon.

Allergies & Food Restrictions

Please inform Kinderhaus of any allergies, food or otherwise, and complete the Allergy Information Form so we may have it on file. Time will be set aside to meet and discuss proper instruction to provide the child with a safe environment. If an allergy (e.g., a peanut allergy) requires whole group action, notice will be given to all parents to avoid these items in lunches and snacks brought from home.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

It is important to the program that children are feeling well when attending. When a child feels ill, especially in an outdoor program, they will have a difficult time maintaining regular routines and activities.

Illness

Please keep your child at home if they exhibit any of the following:

Ear temperature of 100 degrees F or higher

Vomiting or diarrhea occurring more than once in 24hours

Continuous or hacking cough

Sore throat

Contagious conditions such as chicken pox, influenza, strep throat, pink eye, scabies, or lice

A rash that is either contagious or impedes on your child's daily function

If your child exhibits any of the above symptoms while at school, I will notify you immediately. If you receive a call about your child, it will be expected that you make arrangements to pick up your child within the hour.

If your child comes down with a contagious illness, please notify the teacher as it may be necessary to pass along information to other parents.

Fevers

Your child must be fever free (without the aid of fever-reducing medications) for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to Kinderhaus. If the child has been prescribed antibiotics, they may return to school after having been appropriately treated for at least 24 hours.

Medication

I require written permission and instructions to administer medicines, sunscreens, diapering products, and insect repellants. Prescription medicines must have the child's name and directions on the label and instructions must be given by the parent. (The Permission to Administer must be completed).

Any medications administered, along with accidents and injuries, will be recorded in the child's file and shared with parents.

If an ambulance is needed due to a medical emergency, parents will be responsible for any cost. Parents will be contacted as soon as possible after calling 911.

Sunscreen and Insect Repellent

I keep natural sunscreen and deet-free insect repellent on hand for use throughout the school year. If you want your child to use a certain sunscreen or repellent, please label the bottle, notify me, and place it on the top shelf of your child's locker.

If you do not want any products used on your child, you may reflect that on the Permission to Administer form.

Ticks

It is always tick season. For this reason, the children will learn to do a basic tick check at the end of our days, but it is important to check your child at home at the end of each day.

Vaccinations

Signed vaccination forms are required for all children who attend state licensed child care programs. Kinderhaus is required to have records on file for each child showing they have been immunized or have legal exemption from immunizations. Families who choose not to vaccinate or partially vaccinate their child must submit a notarized immunization form before the first day of school.

Hand Washing

At Kinderhaus, children will practice hand washing for 20 seconds, using soap and water, before mealtime, snack, or after using the bathroom. If we eat a snack while outside or on the trail, hand sanitizer or wipes will be available for their use.

Animals

Kinderhaus has several pets on the premises. We have a leopard gecko, Mike, that is housed in our classroom. Finally, we have chickens also housed outside. In the event, any new critters are introduced into the program, a notice will be sent out to enrolled families notifying them of such.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

There will not be any use of non-prescribed mood altering medications, illegal drugs, or alcohol by myself, employees, volunteers, or visitors during hours of child care operation. There will be no tobacco use at any time in or near our facility.

EMERGENCY & SUBSTITUTES

Substitutes

Our program employs Ms. Amber, Ms. Bree, and Ms. Emily, two of which will be on staff at any given moment. If an emergency arises for any teacher, the option of having one teacher on staff is still within our licensing requirements. We may also call another teacher in to substitute.

Insurance

I carry child care liability insurance. The Minnesota Rule of governing family child care indicates that "A provider shall have a certificate of insurance for the residence for general liability coverage for bodily harm in the amount of at least \$100,000 per person and \$250,000 per occurrence: if the provider has...lesser limits or no liability coverage, the provider shall give written notice...to parents.."

Emergencies, Severe Weather & Drills

In the event of...

On-site injury: Minor bumps, bruises, and scrapes are bound to happen, especially in an outdoor program, and will receive the proper first aid by the teacher. I am CPR and First Aid certified. If necessary, your child will be taken to the hospital you have chosen on your admission form and you will be contacted in order to meet us there. It is pertinent that you update contact information if any changes occur. Parents are responsible for all costs should there be an emergency situation.

Severe weather: you will be notified of a shortened school day or an alternative pick up.

Fire: we will evacuate immediately and gather in front of the vegetable garden near the middle of the property.

Tornado: the students and I will take shelter in an approved area in the lower level of my home.

Evacuation: if we need to leave the immediate neighborhood, we will relocate to the Rice Lake City Hall where you may pick up your child, once deemed safe.

Kinderhaus is required to conduct monthly fire drills, along with monthly severe weather drills in September, April, and May, and a lockdown drill twice a year. A log depicting our drills will be located at Ms. Amber's desk. Whenever a drill is planned, time will be taken before and after to show the students how, why and where to go and what to expect. We will then discuss afterward.

HOME & SCHOOL CONNECTION

Understanding that a new school can be a leap into the unknown for children, it will help to talk ahead of time about what kind of fun experiences he or she will have. You may have conversations about meeting new friends, the new environment, or about their new teachers. Luckily, nature is very familiar to children...the mud, the grass, the trees...beginning a new outdoor program may not necessarily feel like they are entering someone else's space, but something that is theirs. 😊 In hopes of a strong home and school connection, we will have numerous opportunities throughout the year to share our space with our families. Through family events, our students can share the place they call school with the people that matter the most to them.

First off, we will use the Brightwheel app for daily check-in/check-out, sharing days off and events on our calendar, sending daily pictures, notes, and messages, and for billing purposes. This app is required for every family as our main means of communication.

Secondly, we will use the Story Park app to document and share learning stories each month. These stories may include imaginative play schemes, a new discovery, art processes, and much more. These stories will link to specific ECIPS standards and offer the opportunity for family feedback and inquiries. Collaborative and individual artwork will be displayed and documented in our classroom to allow the opportunity to share with families throughout the month. All individual pieces will be collected in a portfolio and sent home at the full moon each month.

Thirdly, keeping the lines of communication open between home and school is key to a successful year. Our website, Brightwheel, and our Facebook page should keep us in touch! Parents are required to update Kinderhaus if any personal information changes, such as address, telephone number, email address, etc.

Parents are their child's first teachers. I hope you will see how much we honor the importance of that roll in your child's life. We share in the deep responsibility that is the growth and development of your child and hope you will reciprocate the trust and respect that is needed for a healthy home-school partnership.

What you can do to prepare your child:

1. Work on giving your child the independence to tie, button and zip his or her own clothing and shoes. These things take time, patience and practice, but make transitions at school a lot smoother.
2. Encourage your child to be responsible for his/her own belongings. Children are responsible for putting their things where they belong and for cleaning up items that are taken out.

3. Help them to understand the difference between inside and outside voices. Believe me, we will have ample time for outdoor voices. 😊
4. Encourage your child to say his/her full name (first, middle, last), address, and phone number.
5. Please encourage your child to do things independently. Let them do it. Even if it takes awhile. Practice builds confidence. You don't have to do it for them. They are good at it!
6. Clearly label any/all materials and clothing your child will bring to school to avoid lost items.

ABOUT MS. AMBER

Hello! I am Amber Marsolek, the owner and director at Duluth Forest Kinderhaus.

My husband Seth and I live in Duluth with our three wonderfully active boys (Owen, 14; Alden, 12; Remington, 7) and our fluffy furball of a dog, Willow. We spend our warm months of the year playing [a lot of] baseball, traveling, relaxing at the cabin, mountain biking, and spending time near the water. During the cooler months, you will find us at the hockey rink, hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and spending time in the nearest sauna. As entrepreneurs, my husband and I value putting our talents, education, heart and soul into what we do every day; he with his civil survey/engineering business and competitive baseball program, and me with this forest school program. Life is busy and happy and we wouldn't have it any other way!

I graduated from the University of Minnesota-Duluth in 2005 with a concentration in Sociology/Elementary Education. Shortly thereafter, I accepted a paralegal position and after eight years in the legal field, knew I needed to get back into education. I subsequently earned my Graduate Teaching License in 2013 and Master of Science in Teaching in 2014 from St. Scholastica. I went on to teach kindergarten for several years and eventually landed myself in the role of a kindergarten nature enrichment teacher. Through that opportunity, I became completely engulfed by using nature as a teacher and was inspired to learn more about nature play and its necessary role in children's lives. Research into forest schooling furthered my passion as I realized that this style of education is best practice - a far cry from my experiences inside the classroom. Through my master's research, it became very clear how the environment and experiences within, during the early childhood period, lay the groundwork for all the years ahead. Recognizing the need for this type of program at the primary level helped my vision of Kinderhaus become a reality.

During the 2016-17 school year, I facilitated the transition and teaching of Wandering Roots Nature School in Proctor, MN. Taking the opportunity to teach at the preschool level allowed me to deepen my knowledge and insight into the development leading up to the kindergarten year.

After a summer of serious construction and program development, Kinderhaus entered into its inaugural year in 2017. To be a business owner and an educator is entirely more fulfilling than I could have ever imagined. These little people remind me every day about the wonder and magic that is childhood and how fascinating the natural world is when we let it lead our way.

Over the last six years, I've had the unique and wonderful opportunity to be a part of the Duluth Nature Play Collaborative. This group consists of area nature preschool teachers and involved community members that seek to educate, inspire, connect, and advocate for nature play for

young children in Duluth, MN. You can find the Collaborative on Facebook.

As a mandatory reporter, I am required to immediately report any suspected physical or sexual abuse, or neglect of any child in my care, according to Minn. Stat. Section 626.556.

CONTACT

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