



# Place-Based Kindergarten Program

- Project-based, emergent curriculum in a small school setting
- *Forest Days* spent entirely at our outdoor classroom are Thursday and Friday each week
- Emphasis on collaboration and self-expression through art



The Kindergarten is a lively bridge between the preschool and first grade. Five-year-olds are awakening to the world around them with exuberance, humor, strong emotions and opinions, and the urge to express themselves by talking, moving, drawing, writing, counting, and playing – sometimes all at once! It is an exciting time to be alive. Because the world includes other people, a significant amount of time and attention is devoted to **helping children communicate with others**. Seeing the Light in ourselves and others is modeled and practiced. Safety, kindness, and friendship are cornerstones of our work together. We listen and model language the children can use to express their needs with respect for self and others, and we help children listen to each other.



One important class focus is helping children develop a **sense of place through immersion in nature and in the communities of which we are a part**. Kindergarteners spend Thursdays and Fridays in our outdoor classroom in the woods on our property. In and around our wood stove-heated, canvas-walled tent, they hike, play, explore, and reflect on the natural world and their place in it. Spending time in a natural setting leads to richly extended and often imaginative units of study that involve asking and recording questions, finding resources to look up information, using art to represent what is being learned, experimenting, and conversing. The reverence and excitement generated builds a sense of stewardship that we hope lasts a lifetime.

Role-play, fantasy, and creativity are alive and well, both inside and out. When children use a large log in the woods as their own horse or boat, they help their minds develop in wonderful ways. Inside, props, puppets, and art materials are available for children to stretch imaginatively. Storytelling arises and writing is suddenly contagious. Since the best preparation for children's continued school success is meeting them at their current stage of development, **academic learning is embedded in the projects, activities, and play that emerge from student interest**. Teachers gradually introduce new learning from all the disciplines of school – language and literacy, math, science, social studies, art, music, and movement – in a developmentally appropriate way. Teachers carefully observe students for signals that they are each ready to be nudged forward while offering a program that is enriching and motivating. Kindergarten students attend art, music, Spanish, and physical education classes each week.



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