



**Roots Forest School  
Family Handbook  
2025-2026 School Year**

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## **2025–2026 Program Offerings**

All classes take place in Ponderosa State Park beginning September 2025 and ending May 2026.

Tuition assistance is available for all classes, you can find the application in the appendix.

### **Parent Toddler Class**

For toddlers aged 18 months (by Sept 1st) to 3 years and a caregiver (siblings welcome)

*Saplings*

Tuesday or Friday

10:45–12:00

\$60/month or \$540 annually

### **Preschool 2 Days Per Week**

3 (by Sept 1st) & 4 year olds

#### **Douglas Firs**

Tuesday and Thursday

9:00am–12:00pm

*or*

#### **Aspens**

Monday and Wednesday

9:00am–12:00pm

\$305/month or \$2,745 annually

### **Preschool 3 Days Per Week**

4 (by Sept 1st) & 5 year olds

#### **Larches**

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday

1:00pm–4:00pm

*or*

#### **Ponderosa Pines**

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday

9:00am–12:00pm

\$380/month or \$3,420 annually

***This schedule is subject to change based on enrollment numbers.***

### **Tuition Information**

\*\*Preschool classes have a **non-refundable registration fee of \$100**, and the Parent Toddler class a **non-refundable registration fee of \$50**. The registration fee is due upon enrollment to hold your child's place for fall. There is only one registration fee per family.

\*\*Sibling Rate: The oldest child pays full price and younger sibling(s) receives a 5% discount.

### **Nondiscrimination Policy**

Roots Forest School does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, or national or ethnic background in administration of its education policies, admission policies, tuition assistance programs, and other school-administered programs.



### **Mission**

*Through nature-based early childhood education, Roots Forest School fosters curiosity, community, and imagination to inspire stewardship and empower life-long learners.*

### **About Us**

Roots Forest School was founded in Ponderosa State Park in 2015. What started as a small parent-toddler program has grown to a full preschool serving over 70 students a year from Valley and Adams counties. In 2019 we obtained federal 501(c)3 non-profit status, allowing us to receive local, federal and state grants along with private donations. This helps us strive for equal access to this unique learning opportunity for children from families across all income levels.

### **Why Forest School?**

Much of the day at forest school is play and inquiry based, student-led, and outdoors. Research shows that this approach encourages the development of skills and traits that will contribute to a student's success in future academic and personal endeavors.

In an outdoor environment, children will:

- Develop a sense of wonder, a motivating factor for lifelong learning.
- Develop independence by having more space to roam.
- Develop judgment and an ability to assess risk.
- Be stimulated by constantly changing surroundings.
- Spend the day running, jumping, balancing, climbing, and exploring.

Play allows children to:

- Use their creativity while developing dexterity, as well as physical and emotional strength.
- Develop executive function, which is the ability to control and direct emotion and behavior, an indicator of success in school.
- Create a world where they can conquer their fears.
- Enhance their confidence and develop resilience for future challenges.
- Learn how to work in groups, negotiate, and resolve conflict.

## **Equity and Inclusion at Roots**

At Roots we are committed to creating a safe, supportive learning community where all children feel welcome and are celebrated. During these early years, children are constructing their own identity and attitudes toward others. We aim to foster confidence and positive social identities in each child as they gain understanding of the ways in which we are all similar and different. It is our goal to model and encourage anti-bias attitudes that lead to a more inclusive and caring community.

As a school, we recognize the value in having a diverse community of learners and families as well as staff, administrators, and board members. Roots does not discriminate in its admission of students nor in its hiring of staff. We recognize that we will always have more work to do – both internally and in the classroom – to meet the above commitments; we are eager to engage in this work and welcome your feedback.

## **Curriculum**

### *Overview*

We use an emergent curriculum, grounded in our place and community. This means that student interests guide our learning topics, with teachers providing hands-on opportunities and engaging lessons to extend the learning. Students at Roots have the opportunity to learn about our local environment by being immersed in it. Our activities follow the flow of the seasons as we learn about local ecology, seasonal changes, and the importance of taking care of our place. On a given day we might be studying different types of seeds and how they are dispersed or what wild animals are doing to prepare for winter.

### *Mathematics and Science*

Students are introduced to a variety of scientific and navigation tools including magnifying glasses, microscopes, thermometers, compasses, and maps. Scientific exploration is inquiry-based with students posing questions and teachers acting as facilitators. Students explore and experiment to find answers. Mathematical skills are built into our day as we count objects and identify patterns in our environment, explore shapes, measure snowfall, sing songs and play games revolving around a range of mathematical skills from number sense to geometry.

### *Literacy*

Literacy is woven into our daily curriculum, beginning at our opening circle. After our daily greeting, students and teachers work together to decode our picture of the day and read the student job chart. Teachers share rich and engaging stories with classes daily at circle times. As we explore Ponderosa State Park, students encounter print on signs, often pausing to identify letters they recognize or to ask teachers for help reading the sign. Students also develop familiarity with the alphabet by learning to spell and write their own names and the names of their classmates, and by naming the things around them. Over the course of the year, students help create a Forest Alphabet book that includes the objects and living things we encounter daily. Through art projects and the use of available writing and drawing materials, students develop fine motor skills, practice making marks and develop the understanding that symbols convey different meanings.

### *Music*

At Roots, music supports the development of pre-literacy skills such as rhyming, sound awareness, letter identification and symbolic representation. Songs are used for greetings, transitions, storytelling, and movement. Students also have an opportunity each day to choose to work with music materials in the forest classroom.

### *Social and Emotional Skills*

Through all of our outdoor experiences and academic learning, we are practicing compassion for each other and our environment. Teachers at Roots work to foster behaviors that show kindness and benefit the group. To guide behavior, teachers present students with choices so that the child can determine what will best promote their participation.

Students spend valuable time interacting with the other children in their class throughout our day. This environment affords the children opportunities to develop skills in collaboration, cooperation, negotiation, problem solving, and conflict resolution.

### **Daily Routines**

We begin our time together outside with an opening circle, honoring each child's presence by greeting them individually. We sing songs and participate in community building activities to strengthen our group bond. Students and teachers preview the day together, sharing ongoing projects and new activities for discovery.

Most days, after our morning circle, students set to work in our forest classroom for 'walkabout.' Walkabout is a time for play, inquiry-based projects and exploration in our outdoor classroom. This might consist of 'cooking' in our forest kitchen, working in our building site, acting out or retelling stories in our theater, exploring seasonal items at the science center, engaging in imaginative play, reading stories in our library, exploring the sound station, playing on our slackline, engaging with our current art materials, or building with tree or ice blocks. Projects and materials designed to extend students' recent interests and learning are also available during this time.

Throughout Walkabout, children may go to the snack area and eat from their individual snack container. We present this option as well as a group snack after walkabout so that children can respond to their body's needs and eat when they are hungry.

After a busy morning of 'work', we clean up and gather for a shared snack and story. Storytime is a valuable learning time where students gather in one place, recite our snack song, and practice table manners while sharing conversation. We practice listening skills as students take turns sharing exciting moments from the day's class or as a teacher reads a book. When students are finished, they help with the snack clean-up process.

Some days we do a special group activity which may include hiking, animal tracking, visiting our group sit spot at the lake, skiing, snowshoeing, cooking over the fire, or engaging in a seasonal art project.

To close our day, we gather in a circle to review our day's learning and adventures together. Depending on the day, students might share their family collage with the class or play a number game like Estimation Jar or Number Line Squeeze. Students and teachers have the opportunity to share a favorite moment, something they learned, or an appreciation to a classmate. We close with our goodbye song as students are greeted by their families.

### **Parent Toddler Class Routine**

We start the morning outside with an opening circle, honoring each child's presence by greeting them individually. After our circle, we may do a seasonal activity in our forest classroom or explore an area of Ponderosa State Park, following the interests of the toddlers. Different seasons provide for an array of possible activities. We might hike and explore a small portion of Meadow Marsh trail in the fall or explore animal tracks in the winter. After our exploration, we enjoy a snack and story together. Our day closes with a short circle time consisting of favorite songs and movement activities.

### **Enrollment Requirements**

Students in drop-off classes must be 3 years of age by September 1st.

Students in drop-off classes must be fully potty trained (no pull-up diapers) by the start of preschool. Unlike traditional indoor programs, your child will frequently be sorting through many layers of clothing on their way to and from the bathroom.

In accordance with Idaho law, all students must have updated immunization records or an Idaho Immunization Waiver on file with our school.

We are outside in all kinds of weather! Your child must be prepared (and want!) to be outside in rain, snow, and sunshine.

Roots families must have an Idaho State Parks Passport on their vehicle to enter Ponderosa State Park. These can be purchased for \$10 (annual fee) online with your Idaho vehicle registration renewal or at the Valley County DMV office in Cascade.

### **Required Gear**

So that we may spend as much of our school day outside as possible, we require all students to have adequate outdoor gear. Below are some items we have found to work well for students in the weather conditions we encounter.

- Bogs boots for snow and rain
- Rain pants and raincoat or rain suit: recommended – Oakiwear, REI, LL Bean
- Wool socks: recommended – REI, Smartwool, Fox River
- Mittens: recommended – Gordini, Reima, Head
- Long underwear (non cotton): recommended – REI, Cabelas, Patagonia
- Snow pants and coat or snowsuit: recommended – REI, Oakiwear, Columbia, Obermeyer
- Warm hat for winter
- Hat or sunglasses for sunny days

- Child size backpack with a chest clip: recommended – REI Tarn 12
- Water bottle: recommended – anything leakproof

We understand that outfitting young children for our climate can be expensive! Through donations and grants we have acquired a large supply of outdoor gear that will be available for check out in September. McCall Sports is also an excellent resource for high-quality, gently used gear, along with numerous consignment shops in the Boise area. [Oakiwear](#) offers Roots families a 25% discount, which is shared with our school community at the beginning of each school year.

### **Backpacks**

Students should bring a backpack and water bottle to class each day. In the backpack please keep a bag labeled with your child's name that contains a spare set of clothing (shirt, pants, socks, underwear). During the winter months an extra set of mittens or gloves is appreciated.

### **Forest School Activities**

Forest schools differ from traditional school settings in the sense that students get to spend the majority, if not all, of their class time outside. Another factor that distinguishes a forest school from other school settings is the nature based activities in which your child will participate. Please be sure you are comfortable with your child participating in the activities below.

- Playing in the woods under adult supervision
- Building forts and shelters
- Crawling through brush, walking on logs, climbing on boulders
- Touching plants and insects in the forest
- Playing with sticks, rocks, and found nature items
- Taking hikes through the forest
- Cooking over the fire with adult assistance
- Using the bathroom in the forest
- Building snow caves



## **Tuition**

We have two tuition payment options:

- 1) Pay the full year's tuition via cash, check, or credit card\*\* by September 1st, 2025.
- 2) Sign up for monthly auto-pay from your checking account or credit card\*\* to be withdrawn on the 7th of each month from September through May.

\*\*Payments processed by credit card (annual or monthly) will have a 2% processing fee added to the total amount. For recurring credit card payments a signed copy of the Recurring Credit Card Payment Authorization form must be on file in order for credit card payments to begin processing.

To accommodate monthly payments, we take the annual tuition fee and divide it by 9 months of school. Because of this, the tuition will remain the same each month even though all months do not have the same number of school days.

## **Refunds or Credits**

We cannot give refunds or credits for inclement weather closings, holiday breaks, family vacations, or illnesses. If you feel you have a unique situation, please speak with us.

## **Withdrawal Policy**

If you need to withdraw your child from our program, please provide **30 days notice**. This allows us time to fill the spot. For families who paid full-year tuition upfront, a refund will be issued for any unused months after the withdrawal date.

## **Additional Expenses**

Parents should anticipate occasional small expenses throughout the year including field trips and special projects. Financial assistance is available for any of these expenses.

## **Tuition Assistance**

Financial Assistance is available for all classes on a first-come, first-served basis. Applications for assistance should be submitted with registration paperwork. This can be filled out online, or the hard copy in the appendix can be emailed to [info@rootsforestschool.com](mailto:info@rootsforestschool.com).

### **Illness Policy**

Parents/Guardians will keep their child home if the child has had a fever (temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater), vomiting, or diarrhea within 24 hours of class. A no-touch thermometer will be available at Roots if needed. We request children also stay home if they are experiencing notable fatigue, persistent coughing, or excessive nasal drainage.

If your child tests positive for COVID-19: Roots encourages families to follow current CDC recommendations regarding isolation and masking. Please contact [www.cdc.gov/COVID19](http://www.cdc.gov/COVID19) or Maura Goldstein ([maura@rootsforestschoo.com](mailto:maura@rootsforestschoo.com)) with any questions.

### **Snack**

We ask all families in our drop off preschool classes to contribute about every other month to our stock of dried goods. This allows us to have a variety of snacks to choose from each day.

Families in the Saplings classes are asked to provide snack for their own child(ren) each class meeting.

### **Birthdays**

We love celebrating these exciting milestones at Roots! We typically celebrate birthdays at snack time with our special birthday song and by taking a photo of the birthday child wearing our birthday crown. You are welcome to send in a special snack on that day if you like. If you'd like to be present for your child's in-school birthday celebration, you may coordinate with their teachers in advance.

### **Parent Volunteers**

We welcome parent volunteers to join us for class, field trips, and special events. If you or a family member would like to volunteer, please coordinate with your child's teacher at least 24 hours prior to class.

### **Winter Snow Removal**

Our wall tent classroom offers a warm, cozy space for indoor learning when needed. In winter, we need to keep the tent roof, forest shelter, and surrounding areas clear of snow. **Each family will be assigned 4-6 days** of snow removal duties during the school year. On days your child attends class, please check and clear snow from the shelters if needed. If weekday shifts don't work for your family, you will be signed up for weekend and holiday slots instead.

### **Extreme Weather Policies**

At Roots we spend the majority, if not all, of our class time outdoors. Students should come prepared for learning outdoors in the sun, rain, and snow. In the case of extreme weather, we do have an indoor facility. The safety and well-being of our students is our first priority and we make our decisions to go indoors based on our students' needs.

We may remain open in inclement weather even if McCall-Donnelly School District is closed. We expect that families will use their own judgment in deciding whether or not

to transport their child to class. We reserve the right to cancel class if Ponderosa Park or local authorities deem conditions unsafe.

## **Forest School Experiences**

We believe in using a place-based approach to education. Our local environment and community provide a plethora of hands-on learning experiences. Some of our favorite experiences include:

- An annual fall field trip to a farm, orchard, or garden where we may harvest fruit or vegetables, learn about animals such as chicken or deer, make nature art, press our own apple cider, etc.
- Hiking the Lily Marsh Trail and acting out the Three Billy Goats Gruff on the Lily Marsh Bridge.
- Composting snack scraps into our school worm bin, learning about vermi-composting and worms.
- Catching snowflakes for viewing under a microscope as we learn about snowflakes and how they are formed.
- Exploring the surface and ice of frozen Payette Lake.
- Studying the water cycle. Visiting multiple locations on the Payette Lake shoreline to view the snow run-off and play in the newly formed streams. Building boats out of natural materials, attempting to dam the streams and reroute them.
- Studying local birds and learning from a local ornithologist.
- Building and hanging a bird box in the Park.
- Cleaning out bird boxes in the Park in anticipation of the return of birds in the spring.
- Studying bird feathers/wings and then creating child-sized versions for acting out our own migrations.
- Studying seeds, including collecting seeds in the park, learning about how seeds travel, eating seed snacks, grinding corn and wheat into flour for baking, and planting our own seeds.
- Learning campfire safety and cooking over a fire.
- Hiking to Payette Lake each month, making observations of how the lake scene changes through the seasons.
- Family events such as 'Stories Around The Fire' and 'Spring Forest Tea.'

### **Important Class Dates 2025-2026**

September 2 – 5: Staff Training and Prep

**September 8 – 12: First week all classes**

October 31: Staff Development – No Classes

November 24 – 28: Fall Break – No Classes

December 22 – January 2: Winter Break – No Classes

January 19: Martin Luther King Jr. Day – No Classes

February 16: Presidents' Day – No Classes

March 20: Staff Development – No Classes

March 23 – 27: Spring Break – No Classes

**May 18 – 22: Last week of all classes**

## Resources

View some of our curriculum resources here:

*Growing Up Wild: Exploring Nature With Young Children*

<https://www.fishwildlife.org/projectwild/growing-wild>

*Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood*

<https://www.plt.org/curriculum/environmental-education-for-early-childhood/>

### Recommended Reading:

[Early Literacy in the Outdoor Classroom](#)

<http://naturalstart.org/feature-stories/reading-landscape-early-literacy-outdoor-classroom>

[The Importance of Play](#)

[https://www.child-encyclopedia.com/sites/default/files/let-the-children-play\\_jane-hewes.pdf](https://www.child-encyclopedia.com/sites/default/files/let-the-children-play_jane-hewes.pdf)

[Benefits of Connecting Children with Nature](#), The Natural Learning Initiative, 2012

[https://naturalstart.org/sites/default/files/benefits\\_of\\_connecting\\_children\\_with\\_nature\\_infosheet.pdf](https://naturalstart.org/sites/default/files/benefits_of_connecting_children_with_nature_infosheet.pdf)

*Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv

<http://richardlouv.com/books/last-child/>

### Outdoor Gear:

<https://oakiwear.com/>

<https://www.rei.com/>

### Contact Information:

Roots Forest School

208-315-0925

PO Box 2003, McCall, ID 83638

[info@rootsforestschool.com](mailto:info@rootsforestschool.com)

[www.rootsforestschool.com](http://www.rootsforestschool.com)



**The participant agreement below must be signed by parents at  
Back to School Orientation in September of 2025.**

**ROOTS FOREST SCHOOL 2025-2026**

**PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT**

**LIABILITY RELEASE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RISK**

***This form must be signed in its entirety with no deletions or alterations. We want to ensure each participant understands the risks inherent in playing outdoors in a group setting. THIS IS A RELEASE OF LIABILITY. PLEASE READ BEFORE SIGNING. DO NOT SIGN THE RELEASE IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND OR AGREE WITH ITS TERMS.***

I wish for my child to participate in Roots Forest School, which I understand to be an outdoor education experience. I understand that by participating in this program, my child will be using public parks and forests, where hazards may exist and I am aware of and appreciate the risks that may result. I fully acknowledge and understand that there are significant risks associated with the activities associated with outdoor school. Activities are further described below. I am also aware that accidents can occur and that my child may be seriously injured or die as a result. I agree to accept all risks of injury or death.

In consideration for my child being allowed to participate in Roots Forest School, I agree to assume all risks and to release and hold harmless Roots Forest School, its officers, directors, shareholders, agents, employees, and all sponsors, beneficiaries, affiliated organizations, officials, clubs, communities and friends of Roots Forest School of and from any and every claim, demand, action or right of action, of whatever kind or nature, either in law or equity, arising from or by reason of any bodily injury or personal injuries or death to participant minor child(ren), myself, or third parties, any property damage, and expenses thereof.

I intend by this waiver and release to release, in advance, and to waive my rights and discharge all of the persons and entities mentioned above, from any and all claims for damages, health, personal injury or property damage which I may have, or which may hereafter accrue to me as a result of my child's participation in the Roots Forest School program, even though that liability may arise from negligence or carelessness on the part of the persons or entities being released, from dangerous or defective property or equipment owned, maintained or controlled by them or because of their possible liability without fault. I understand and agree that this waiver and release is binding on my heirs, assigns and legal representatives.

I further acknowledge the contagious nature of COVID-19 and voluntarily assume the risk that any minors under my guardianship may be exposed to or infected by COVID-19 by participating in Roots and that such exposure or infection may result in personal injury, illness, permanent disability, and death. I understand that the risk of becoming exposed to or infected by COVID-19 by participating in Roots may result from the actions, omissions, or negligence of myself, children under my guardianship, and others including, but not limited to: Roots or Roots' agents, third parties, and other participants in Roots. In consideration of being able to participate in Roots, I do for myself and any minors under my guardianship, and all respective heirs and assigns, voluntarily assume the risk of participating in Roots, and hereby agree and release, discharge, indemnify, hold harmless, and promise not to sue Roots, their officers, officials, agents and or employees, and owners and lessors of premises used for Roots of and from any and every claim, demand, action or right of action, of whatever kind or nature, either in law or in equity arising from or by reason of any bodily injury or personal injuries known or unknown, death or property damage resulting or to result from my participation or any minors under my guardianship participation in Roots or other actions or activities in connection therewith, whether by negligence or not, including but not limited to the following: cancellation or termination of Roots, exposure to COVID-19, contraction of COVID-19, and any and all health consequences and damages related to COVID-19 including personal injury, illness, permanent disability, and death.

I have carefully read this waiver and release and fully understand its contents. I am aware that this is a release of liability and a contract between me and the persons and entities mentioned above and all of the respective officers, directors, agents and representatives and I sign it of my own free will.

I understand that, as a participant in Roots Forest School, by way of example, and not limitation, my child may do activities such as:

- Play in the woods under adult supervision
- Build forts and shelters
- Crawl through brush, walk on logs, climb on boulders
- Touch plants and insects in the forest
- Play with sticks, rocks, and found nature items
- Take hikes through the forest
- Play in water puddles, mud, rain, and snow
- Be barefoot on the beach and dip feet in the water
- Go to the bathroom in the woods
- Snowshoe and hike through the forest
- Be outside in all kinds of weather

In case of a medical emergency, I give permission for my child to be treated at St. Luke's McCall. I give Roots Forest School, its agents, and employees permission to provide emergency medical treatment to my child(ren) which by way of example, but not limitation, may include: administering an Epinephrine Auto-Injector (EpiPen), providing CPR, and any necessary first aid measures.

Outdoor Clothing: Students will be outside every class day. Parents are responsible for providing their child with appropriate clothing for the weather. In winter this means students will wear high quality winter boots (Bogs, Sorels, etc.), winter socks, long underwear, snowsuit, hat, and mittens. If you need assistance acquiring high quality gear we have outdoor gear available for checkout.

☐ By checking this box, I grant Roots Forest School and its subsidiary programs the right to take photographs of my child in connection with its various educational, play, and conservation activities. I authorize Roots Forest School, its assigns and transferees to copyright, use and publish the same in print and/or electronically for such purposes as publicity, illustration, education, advertising, social media, and Web content.

☐ By checking this box, I acknowledge that I have read and agree to the Roots Illness Policy.

This is a legal document. Read it carefully before signing below. Keep a copy of this form for your records.

**I am the parent or legal guardian of the below-name participant child(ren). I understand that my signature below confirms my agreement that all of the provisions of this release agreement are applicable to and binding on the said minor child(ren) and any adult participants.**

**Participant name(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Parent/Guardian:** \_\_\_\_\_





**Roots Forest School Inc.**  
**Tuition Assistance Application**  
**2025–2026 School Year**

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Yearly Taxable Income: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Family Members in Household: \_\_\_\_\_

Class(es) we would like to enroll children in:

- ☐ Saplings: \$60/month – Tuesday 10:45–12:00
- ☐ Saplings: \$60/month -- Friday 10:45–12:00
- ☐ Aspens: \$305/month – Monday & Wednesday 9:00–12:00
- ☐ Douglas Firs: \$305/month – Tuesday & Thursday 9:00–12:00
- ☐ Ponderosa Pines: \$380/month – Monday/Wednesday/Friday 9:00–12:00
- ☐ Larches: \$380/month – Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday 1:00–4:00

Amount we are able to pay each month \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please feel free to provide any additional information below for us to consider along with your application.

I certify that the above information is correct.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

*\*\*Online version of this form is available by emailing [info@rootsforestschool.com](mailto:info@rootsforestschool.com) You may also fill out this form by calling us at 208.315.0925\*\**

*Roots Forest School doesn't discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, or national or ethnic background in administration of its education policies, admission policies, scholarship programs, and other school administered programs.*