

BALL'S FALLS NATURE SCHOOL



NIAGARA PENINSULA
CONSERVATION
AUTHORITY

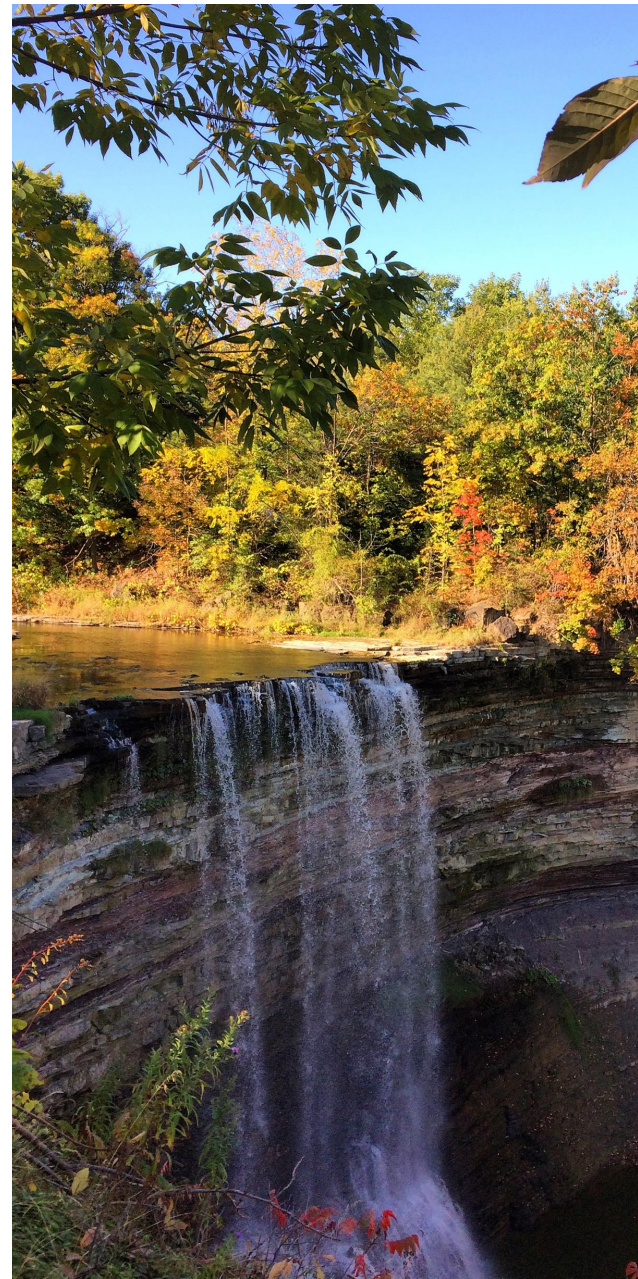
2020/2021
PARENT
GUIDE



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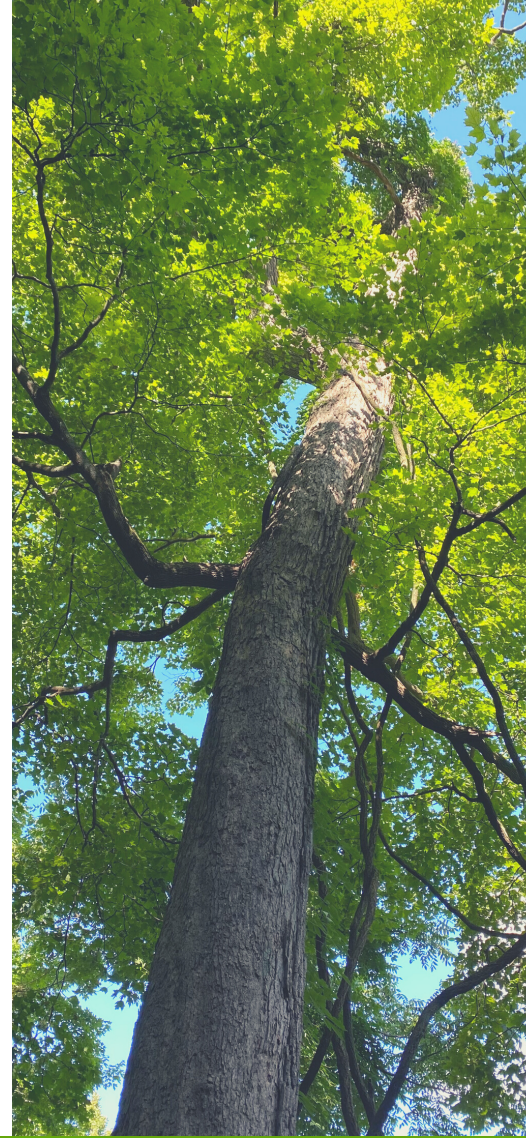
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ADMINISTRATION AND STAFFING

STAFF HIRING

Our lead educator is a professional member of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). Support staff are also members of the OCT, or are Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) or equivalent. All staff have extensive experience in outdoor experiential education. Staff are trained in Standard First Aid and CPR-C, and have passed their vulnerable sector check. Opportunities for professional development are offered regularly, encouraging our teachers to practice reflective teaching.



TEACHER-STUDENT RATIOS

Our teacher to student ratio is 1:8. Due to the nature of our program, we require a minimum of two staff with the students when exploring forested areas, even when the number of students is less than 8.



ENROLMENT AND ADMISSION

AGE REQUIREMENTS

Children must be aged 5-7 or beginning in SK, Grade 1 or Grade 2 to participate in Nature School.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

In order for students to participate in Ball's Falls Nature School, they must meet the following expectations:

- Students must be able to listen to and follow all instructions. This is to ensure the health and safety of all participants and staff.
- Students must be independent in the following sense:
 - students must be able to use the washroom by themselves
 - students must be able to get and put away their lunch in their backpacks by themselves
 - students must be able to don and doff clothing and shoes by themselves or with very limited help from teachers (i.e. teacher helps to tie a shoelace once student has put on their shoe)
- Students must be respectful of their teachers, their peers, their families, and the environment around them

ENROLMENT DEPOSIT

In order to confirm your registration in any of our sessions, the \$200 non-refundable deposit for each session must be paid and the registration form must be filled out.

If you have paid the deposit for one session, you are not guaranteed a spot in the following session until your deposit is paid in full.



LOGISTICAL INFORMATION

HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday-Friday 9:00AM-3:00pm

Extended Care

8:00am-4:00pm

TUITION AND PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Please see the table below for information regarding tuition amounts and due dates. The months of September, December, and March have been prorated to reflect holidays.



SEPTEMBER

- \$200 Deposit due at time of registration
- \$425 due by Monday September 14, 2020

OCTOBER

- \$1000 due by Thursday October 1st, 2020

NOVEMBER

- \$1000 due by Sunday November 1st, 2020

DECEMBER

- \$750 due by Tuesday December 1st, 2020
- Last day of school December 18th

JANUARY

- \$200 Deposit due at time of registration
- \$800 due by Monday January 4th

FEBRUARY

- \$1000 due by Monday February 1st, 2021

MARCH

- \$875 due by Monday March 1st, 2021
- March Break= March 15th-19th

APRIL

- \$200 Deposit due at time of registration
- \$800 due by Thursday April 1st, 2021

MAY/JUNE

- \$1000 due by Saturday May 1st, 2021
- \$1000 due by Tuesday June 1st, 2021



LOGISTICAL INFORMATION

ADDITIONAL FEES

Extended Care: \$50/Family/Week or \$200/month

8-9am, 3-4pm

Late Pickup Fee: Any student that is not picked up by 4:00 pm is subject to a late pickup fee of \$5/15 minutes late.

CANCELLATION POLICY

At the beginning of each session, families are given a grace period of 2 weeks in which to decide to withdraw their student from that session. During this time, should a family choose to

withdraw, they will receive a refund of the remainder of their month/session, dependent on their chosen payment plan. Any withdrawals that take place after the session cancellation deadline will be addressed on a case by case basis. See the table below for cancellation deadline dates

In the event that the Ontario Government or Niagara Public Health issue another period of lockdown due to COVID-19, families will be given a refund of the remainder of their month/session, dependent on their chosen payment plan.

FALL SESSION

- Grace period September 14-30th
- Deadline to withdraw:
Wednesday September 30th, 2020

WINTER SESSION

- Grace period January 4-15th
- Deadline to withdraw:
Friday January 15th, 2021

SPRING SESSION

- Grace period April 1-15th
- Deadline to withdraw:
Thursday April 15th, 2021

LOGISTICAL INFORMATION

CALENDAR

Families will be given a link to a Google Calendar with all of our important dates. We will be closed on the following days:

October 12th (Thanksgiving)

December 21st - January 3rd (Winter Holidays)

February 15th (Family Day)

March 15th-19th (March Break)

April 2nd (Good Friday), April 5th (Easter Monday)

May 24th (Victoria Day)

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the event that the weather/road conditions make travel to and/or from Nature School unsafe for either Ball's Falls staff or Nature School participants, we will cancel programs for that day. We will notify families by telephone by 7:00 am in the event that we must close for the day. In the event that the weather makes it necessary for Nature School to close earlier than normal, this decision will be communicated to families such that they are able to make the necessary arrangements for early pick-up. No refund will be given if the day's program is cancelled due to inclement weather.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

GUIDELINES

To help ensure the health and safety of our students, we will be following the Ontario Ministry of Health guidelines for day camp operation as they worked successfully during our 2020 Summer Adventure Camp program. This will be combined with guidelines for the Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools.

STUDENT SCREENING

Parents/guardians will be required to complete an online student screening form each morning before arriving at school including temperature checks. Should a student display a fever or have any answer of "yes" on the screening, they will not be permitted to attend school that day. Should any parent/guardian also display a fever or have any answer of "yes" on the screening, they will not be permitted on the premises. In the event that a screening is not completed prior to arrival, the Lead Teacher, Jenna Moorhead will conduct an in-person screening and take the student and the parent/guardian's temperature.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

IF STUDENT/STAFF SHOW SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19 AT SCHOOL

- Any student or staff member that shows symptoms of COVID-19 while at school will be isolated in a designated space and will be required to be picked up immediately.
- The isolated student/staff will be required to wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) including masks
- When the student/staff member has left the premises, the supervisory staff will contact the local Public Health Department to inform them of the situation and seek guidance as to how to proceed and inform families.
- At this time, supervisory staff will provide Public Health with student/staff information so they can get in touch and inform the family/person how to proceed.
- Supervisory staff will arrange for a thorough and deep cleaning of all equipment and facilities.
- Supervisory staff will continue to monitor the rest of the group.
- The student/staff member will not be allowed to return to school unless given permission by Public Health. No refund will be given if a student must remain home as a result of COVID-19 symptoms.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

FACE MASKS

Students will not be required to wear masks in the school environment due to the outdoor nature of our school day. They may wear them if parents/guardians prepare their children to do so.

COHORTS

Our school will operate as one cohort of 16 students. This group will stick together throughout the day, though smaller groups linked by grade will separate throughout the day for curriculum-based learning.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

The Ontario Ministry of Health guidelines include a strict adherence of a minimum 2 metre physical distancing between individuals. We will help maintain this via a variety of means including markings on picnic tables and spacing of equipment. We do require the help of families to help reiterate the importance of physical distancing, even among siblings and members of the same social bubble. In the event that a staff member must breach the 2 metre physical distancing, staff members will wear a mask.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

SCHOOL EQUIPMENT

School operations will minimize the frequency of staff and students touching shared equipment, surfaces, and personal items. Staff will disinfect equipment and surfaces, including washroom facilities, multiple times throughout the day.

SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

Programming for school activities will have an emphasis on more individual activities that ensure physical distancing. While staff develop new programming for the school year, the following questions are considered:

- 1) Does the activity violate a public health order?
- 2) Does the activity involve shared surfaces or objects frequently touched by hands?
- 3) Can an activity be modified to increase opportunities for physical distancing?

MEALS AND SNACKS

There will be no sharing of food, even among siblings. Students will have to wash their hands before and after lunch and snack times. On occasion, snacks will be provided by staff. All safety measures will be taken by staff including gloves and masks when providing snacks.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

SCHOOL VISITORS

Parents/guardians and families are asked to remain away from the school premises except for drop-off and pick-up. The nature school area at Ball's Falls will be reserved for the exclusive use of the school during school operating hours. Any staff or visitors that enter into the school space for longer than 15 minutes will participate in a health screening by the NPCA Program Assistant and will have to provide sign in information.

RISK ASSOCIATED WITH IN-PERSON ACTIVITIES

Please note that there are risks associated with in-person learning in group settings. Staff will take precautions as advised by Niagara Public Health to minimize this risk. By registering your student(s) voluntarily for nature school, parents/guardians are aware of and accept this risk.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

RISKY PLAY/OUTDOOR PLAY

Children in our program have opportunities to participate in safe, risky play. Teachers help students to assess and manage risks. Children are permitted to engage with their environment, and keep themselves safe. For example, students may carry sticks, climb trees, use a slingshot, and light and manage fires.

While outside, children will be exposed to the potential risks associated with this environment. This includes but is not limited to, sun exposure, heat, cold, insects, plants, pollen, snow, rain, etc. Students will also be walking along trails located on the Niagara Escarpment, will be within close proximity to the Twenty Mile Creek, and will cross a road to access different parts of our property. All our staff are Standard First Aid and CPR-C certified and are constantly taking surveys of the area for safety concerns to help manage risks. Our goal is to keep your child safe, while giving them the freedom to explore and engage with their environment. Families that enroll their child in nature school are aware of and accept all risks.



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CHILD ENTRY AND RELEASE POLICY

Parents must give Ball's Falls Nature School written authorization for the people who may have access to their children (i.e., a relative who picks up the child, emergency contact in cases where parents cannot be reached). If written authorization is not possible, the parent must email programming@npca.ca to provide authorization. We always act in the best interests of the child if there is any confusion or uncertainty.

Unauthorized Pick-up Procedure:

If someone other than a parent/authorized alternate pick-up person arrives to pick up a child and we have not been notified in advance by the authorized parent/guardian we will

1. Call parent for verbal authorization
2. If parent cannot be located, the child is not allowed to leave the premises until a parent has been contacted
3. Nature School staff will remain with the child until an authorized pick up person arrives.

Privacy Policy:

According to the law, both parents of a child have equal access to a child and to the information about the child's development, health and welfare. The only time a staff member can deny access of a parent to a child is when there is a written separation agreement or a legal court order. Ball's Falls Nature School requires a copy of this document if this is the case.

Release of Children to a Person Who Appears to be Unsafe:

Staff will not release a child to a person who appears intoxicated, impaired, or in any way unsafe. In such cases, the alternate emergency contact will be called and the child will stay with Nature School staff until they can be picked up safely. Staff members are legally responsible to protect the children in their care from any perceived risk.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

BEHAVIOUR POLICY

The NPCA is committed to providing the highest level of safety and enjoyment to all participants and staff members at Ball's Falls Nature School. Program participants are expected to exhibit acceptable behaviour. Guidelines for acceptable behaviour will be explained on the first day of the program. Coarse language, theft, physical and aggressive behaviour, inappropriate or uncooperative behaviour will not be tolerated and may result in removal from the program. No refund will be given to a student who has been removed from the program as a result of unacceptable behaviour.

DUTY TO REPORT POLICY

Everyone, including members of the public and professionals who work closely with children share a responsibility to protect children and vulnerable persons from harm. Ball's Falls Nature School recognizes its responsibility to promote safe environments and practices to protect children and vulnerable persons. Our educators are trained to recognize the indicators of neglect and abuse and are legally required to report any suspicions that a child may require protection. The role of the child protection agency is to investigate and determine if there is any proof of abuse or neglect and **Duty to Report** is defined under section 72(1) of the Ontario Child and Family Services act and sets out what must be reported to a child protection agency (e.g. Children's Aid Society -CAS)

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ANTI-HARASSMENT AND NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY



Ball's Falls Nature School is committed to providing an environment free of discrimination and harassment, where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity, can contribute fully and have equal opportunities.

Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, every person has the right to be free from harassment and discrimination. Harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated, condoned or ignored at Nature School. If a claim of harassment or discrimination is proven, disciplinary measures will be applied, up to and including termination of employment.

Nature School is committed to a comprehensive strategy to address harassment and discrimination, including:

- providing training and education to make sure everyone knows their rights and responsibilities
- regularly monitoring organizational systems for barriers relating to Code grounds
- providing an effective and fair complaints procedure
- promoting appropriate standards of conduct at all times

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

COMPLAINTS / GRIEVANCES

It is our goal to strive for quality and excellence in the care of your children, therefore any positive comments or suggestions are greatly appreciated and can be made to programming@npca.ca

We always welcome your input and feedback towards the care of your children. Ball's Falls Nature School appreciates questions or discussions of any kind that influence a positive outcome for your children. However, if you feel that there is a problem concerning the facility or a staff member, please follow the following steps:

- 1) Contact Ball's Falls Nature School Principals Alicia Powell and Jenna Moorhead directly at programming@npca.ca
- 2) They will then review the problem with staff directly to find a resolution
- 3) A follow-up will occur with parents/guardians to ensure the issue has been resolved

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Staff and students at Nature School are encouraged to follow the principles of 'Leave No Trace' as an effort to minimize the ecological impact on our school property. We recognize that having regular repeated access to the same special spots on our property can have an adverse impact on the environment as soil compacts and erodes. As such, we encourage all to stay on the trail when we are hiking, and we also rotate the sites on our property that are used most often. Staff encourage students to leave all living and growing things the way we found them for all to enjoy. Staff and students monitor our most frequented sites on the property for litter and the introduction of invasive species on a regular basis. Activities that have the highest impact are limited to the main school grounds. Regular ecological assessments are also made on our property to monitor the impact we have had on the land and plan for healthy revitalization of it as much as possible.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

MISSION/PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY



Ball's Falls Nature School incorporates many teaching and educational models, making our approach dynamic, innovative and intuitive. We believe that the child's nature and well-being will benefit from the outdoor setting. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, we believe that outdoor-based learning is one of the safest environments that children can be in. History has shown that in other pandemics, schools relocated outside to keep children safe.

Please read the following New York Times article "Schools Beat Earlier Plagues with Outdoor Classes. We Should, Too." by Ginia Bellafante
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/17/nyregion/coronavirus-nyc-schools-reopening-outdoors.html>

Our program will combine Ontario Elementary Curriculum-based learning taught by OCT certified teachers with forest school pedagogies that will be explained on the following page. By not subscribing to one specific learning model, we are able to combine great ideas to create an amazing school environment. We are continuously developing a "classroom" environment that best supports learning and well-being for students and staff. Research supports the idea that early learning in the woods/outdoors has numerous benefits. We plan to contribute to the growing studies and research around the benefits for elementary and junior education - academically, mentally, and socially with this program.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

FOREST SCHOOL PEDAGOGIES



The Child and Nature Alliance of Canada have put together a guide on Forest and Nature Schools. The following page outlines the benefits of forest and nature school pedagogy.

Inquiry-based, emergent and experiential learning

- Allows for personal research by the children in their areas of interest
- Students work on their own interests at their own pace, addressing problems with multiple learning needs in the classroom environment
- Incorporates the whole child, in the context of their family, community, and cultural background, as they carry these with them throughout their experiences

Place-Based learning

- Place-based learning is firmly rooted in the act of connecting children to a particular place through direct experiential contact
- The ability to know a place intimately and to return to a natural space again and again provides children with familiarity while honing their ability to recognize and understand processes of change
- With connection to place comes a desire and sense of responsibility for nature

Play-based learning

- Play is explicitly recognized in Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, November 29, 1989) which declares:
 - Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts

TEACHING AND LEARNING

SAMPLE DAY SCHEDULE



9:00 – 9:15 am = drop off, writers
craft/journal work

9:15 – 9:30 am = morning meeting.
goals and plans for day, reiteration
of rules and boundaries

9:30 am – 12:00 pm = Curriculum-
based learning

12:00 – 12:30 pm = lunch time

12:30 – 3:00 pm = child-led
exploration and educational play

3:00pm = pick up for home time

TEACHING AND LEARNING

PREPARING FOR NATURE SCHOOL

Fall/Spring Supply List

- Small backpack (nothing too large or heavy as your child will have to carry their own bag)
- Lunch and snacks for 2 snack breaks
- Reusable water bottle
- Bug spray/sunscreen
- Full change of clothes
- Rain gear (waterproof boots, pants, jacket), with extra insulation on colder days
- Wool socks on colder days (they insulate even when wet)
- Separate indoor sneakers or running shoes (please no open-toed shoes even on hot days)
- Sun hat for warmer days
- Warmer sweater or jacket for colder days
- Small towel
- hand sanitizer (optional)

Winter Supply List

- Small backpack
- Lunch and snacks for 2 snack breaks
- Reusable water bottle
- Sunscreen (optional)
- Separate indoor sneakers or running shoes
- Small towel
- hand sanitizer (optional)
- Winter hat (must cover ears and stay on the head)
- Balaclava or neck warmer
- Two pairs of warm, waterproof mittens
- One warm, waterproof snowsuit
- One set of warm, waterproof boots
- Wool socks
- Three base layers (thermal shirt and pants, middle layer, wool/fleece sweater- cotton is not recommended for cold weather conditions)
- Two full changes of clothes (particularly socks, underwear and mittens)

TEACHING AND LEARNING

PREPARING FOR NATURE SCHOOL

Labelling

Please ensure that all of your child's items are labelled with their name. We will not be responsible for lost or stolen items

Layering

During the colder months it is very important to dress your child in multiple layers to stay warm outside. Please consider the following recommendations before shopping for your equipment

- 1) Insulation: natural fabrics such as wool or silk work well as an inner layer, as does fleece. Polyester pyjamas are also a good option. The key for the insulating inner layer is to wick moisture away from the skin and insulate it with a breathable layer
- 2) Middle layer: this is another insulation layer that creates 'dead-air space' between the skin and the elements. This airspace helps in keeping warm. Wool sweaters (Merino wool is exceptionally warm and soft on sensitive skin) and fleece tend to work well.
- 3) Outer shell: this layer should be waterproof and windproof, as well as breathable

A note to families

It is not necessary to invest in expensive brand names to keep your child warm and dry. Thrift stores are great places to get excellent outdoor gear and base layers. Mountain Warehouse also has incredible quality gear at very reasonable prices. They also have rain suits which are amazing for fall and spring!



RESOURCES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

On Forest and Nature Schools in Canada

<https://childnature.ca/about-forest-and-nature-school/>

On Ontario Ministry of Health Guidelines

https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/COVID-/summer_day_camp_guidancev1june1-2020_final.pdf?sfvrsn=0

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/guide-reopening-ontarios-schools#section-14>

On excellent outdoor gear

<https://www.mountainwarehouse.com/ca/puddle-kids-printed-waterproof-rain-suit-p12647.aspx/indigo/>

On the NPCA's Educational Resources

<https://npca.ca/our-voice/post/importance-of-outdoor-education-at-home>

<https://npca.ca/learning>

CONTACT US

Ball's Falls Nature School Principal

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