Forest School Chaperone Training

Forest School is an attempt to get Kindergarteners outside for a full day of school one day a month in a natural setting rain, snow or shine. Kindergarten students will be transported from Summerlin, NV to Mount Charleston for a full day of school in the woods. This school experience is modeled after the Waldkindergarten school as outlined in the award winning documentary, “School’s Out: Lessons from a Forest Kindergarten” (<http://www.schoolsoutfilm.com/>).

Education professors Howard Gardner and Katie David argue in their new book, [The App Generation](http://www.amazon.com/dp/0300196210/?tag=slatmaga-20), that kids today are becoming more risk averse. “Rather than wanting to explore, to try things out by themselves, young people are always pushing to find out exactly what is wanted, when it is wanted, how it will be evaluated, what comes next and where we end up.” Furthermore, while on a Q&A panel in November 2013 Gardner said, “Many kids today have never gotten physically lost. They have never been outside, in an unfamiliar place, without a parent or a GPS or a phone app to guide them. They don’t know what it’s like to lose your way in the world around you and to make do until you find it again.

Additionally, a recent study by psychologists at the University of Colorado shows an even stronger reason for free play: children who experienced more undirected free play showed signs of stronger executive function, a strong predictor of success in school. “The more time that children spent in less-structured activities,” wrote researchers, “the better their self-directed executive functioning.”

The purpose of this pilot program then is to take children outside and use the outside experience as a classroom. While we certainly don’t want children to get hurt and understand they must be closely supervised while using certain tools, we also want students to have the freedom of exploration, to understand logical consequences and learn self-control in an organic and natural way. The purpose of this manual then is to help you as an adult understand what is expected of you as a chaperone during the Forest School experience.

***The Rules for Children***

*Run Saw Play Hear Follow Climb Mix Smell Jump Dig Taste Ride Create Talk Yell Imagine Lead Build Ponder Express Emotion Work Pour Sing Examine Hammer Measure Daydream Sketch*

***The Rules for Adults***

*Observe Listen*

Step in with guidance when a child is about to hurt himself, another child, or destroy property.

***We intervene if:***

1. A child hits, bites, scratches, or grabs another child or adult.

2. A child throws something at another child or adult.

3. A child takes an item from another child, and the other child objects.

4. A child asks for personal space and is being ignored by another child.

5. A child is about to break, vandalize, or otherwise harm property.

***How to Use Positive Language:***

Avoid words such as no, don’t, can’t, quit and bad. Tell the children what they can do, not what they can’t do.

Use a calm, kind voice. Whenever possible, empathize first. “It seems you really want to play with that doll. You can have a turn when Sam is done.”

Say: Instead of:

Try again. Please walk. Stop running!

Jordan wants some space. Don’t bother Jordan.

It hurts Pete when you hit him. Don’t hit Pete.

Tell Pete if he does something you don’t like.

Scissors are for cutting. Don’t throw the scissors.

If you want to throw, you can throw a ball outside.

***Logical Consequences:***

If a child throws a stick at another child, the logical consequence is for her to stop playing with the stick. Direct her to another activity or area. “You may go explore another area that looks interesting to you!”

When you are disciplining a child, always tell her how and the consequence will end. “You may come back to the stick when you are ready to stop throwing sticks at another child.”

If a child refuses to cooperate, remove her from the situation, accompany her to a quiet place, and help her calm down. Empathize and use soothing words. “I know you are sad about having to leave the sticks. You really like playing there.”

After she is calm, tell her what she has to do to return to the play area. “When you are ready, you can try again to play with the sticks without throwing them at others.”

***Tips on Mentoring Young Children***

* Don’t force children to join an activity during free play. Adults do not have to direct children’s activities. Children’s attention spans are short. Allow them to stop an activity at any time.
* Help the children put away their toys, but let children know that it is their responsibility to put away the toys they have used.
* Allow children to solve their own problems with other children and materials. Intervene only when they become frustrated or upset.
* If children are wronged, encourage them to use words instead of physical force. Model language, such as “Tell Luke, ‘I am playing with that shovel. You can play with another one.’”
* If a child wants to join in play and other children are not letting her, suggest some way for the child to be included, such as “Four people can fit on the rock,” or, “Let’s have Sarah wash the fruit.”
* If a child sulks, ignore it. You may suggest a new activity, but if he refuses to join, don’t enforce the sulking with further attention.
* Resist the urge to make too many comments when children are engrossed in an activity. Kids can become addicted to comments like “Good job.” Then they won’t do an activity without reinforcement. Kids need uninterrupted play time and involvement.
* Relax. Be cheerful. Smile! Have a sense of humor and enjoy the kids.