



## **2024-2025 Family Handbook**

# Introduction

Welcome to Quest! Thank you for joining us. We are excited to have you here with us and look forward to working with you as we continue to build our culture and our community.

This handbook provides an overview of general information and guidelines related to membership at Quest. It's designed to be a "living document," and is not intended to be comprehensive or to address all of the applications of and exceptions to our general policies.

This Family Handbook may change during the course of the school year based upon needs and input from the community - including feedback from the learners, parents, and guides.

## Overview

### What is Quest?

Quest operates as a supplementary homeschool program that fosters communal learning through educational and interest-driven offerings, play, collaborative problem-solving and outdoor exploration.

### What isn't Quest?

It's good to keep in mind that Quest is not a school. There are no teachers, no tests, no grades (letter, numerical, or other), and no required curricula. We can't guarantee that any member will learn any particular piece of information. While we offer an enriching environment, parents/guardians are responsible for covering the specific subjects and specialized skills that they desire for their child(ren).

### Vision

Quest is a self-directed, mixed-age community where children take an intentional stance on their learning, are wholly engaged in life, and empowered to design and travel their own unique path.

### Mission

Our mission is to nurture lifelong learners, who live authentically, and lead fulfilling lives. We are committed to providing the support and resources necessary to help children explore their interests, acquire essential life skills, and cultivate healthy relationships with themselves and others.

### Values

The following values and core beliefs are at the heart of our microschool, and serve as the guiding principles that support our mission.

**Child-Centered Learning:** A child-centered approach encourages children to take learning into their own hands. When learning is meaningful and driven by interest, it becomes a more efficient and enjoyable process.

Empowering children to take responsibility for their learning and exploration is crucial for fostering self-directed learners. When children have the autonomy to make these choices, they are more invested in their educational journey. Given an environment in which they are encouraged to think about what they are doing (rather than how well they are doing it), children will generally exhibit an abundance of motivation and a healthy appetite for challenge.

As far as the brain is concerned, information that is tied to real-life applications is far more valuable than knowledge that is only abstract. When the brain learns something that it deems useful, it stores that information in its' long-term memory while other non-useful information is purged. When learning is connected to real-life situations, personal experiences or relevant contexts, it enhances comprehension, retention and the ability to transfer knowledge to new situations. If children are curious about how fast they are growing, why not use this as a lesson on addition or decimals. They want to write a story about flying on a unicorn – here is where we can introduce the basics of punctuation. They ask to learn about fighter aircrafts – this is where we bring in historical events. When things are taught in isolation, they are harder to understand and harder to care about.

Each child is unique, with their own interests and learning styles. By embracing and nurturing their individual strengths and passions, we are helping them thrive, grow, and reach their full potential. When children feel supported, accepted, and safe, they feel comfortable asking questions, expressing their thoughts, ideas, and emotions. And by valuing and acknowledging children's thoughts, opinions, and perspectives, we demonstrate that their voices matter and that they are capable. This helps build confidence and self-belief. This confidence and belief in their own abilities serves as a foundation for their future endeavors, including the potential to make their passions financially viable.

**Collaboration:** We aim to create an environment that celebrates working together, that encourages people to engage meaningfully in their own learning and the learning of their peers. This collaborative mindset nurtures communication skills, social skills, problem-solving abilities, and creativity. When individuals have opportunities to work together and learn from one another, it fosters a sense of community and collective growth.

Human connection is a fundamental aspect of our nature, and knowledge sharing plays a crucial role in fostering those connections. We have an innate desire to learn from others and to share our own knowledge and experiences.

By promoting group play, exploration, and projects, we create an environment where children can learn from each other, build on shared discoveries, and cultivate a sense of camaraderie. It enhances their learning experiences, promotes social connections, and nurtures a cooperative and supportive learning community.

**Growth mindset:** Children who are attending to how well they are doing have their self-concept on the line. The image of themselves as smart or competent is endangered by the risk of failing to meet a certain standard of performance. This fixed mindset can create fear of failure and a reluctance to take on challenges. The more they are focused on how well they're doing, the less they are absorbed in the task itself.

On the other hand, fostering a growth mindset enables children to believe that their abilities can be developed through effort, learning, and perseverance. This mindset encourages a focus on the process of learning, rather than on the outcomes. It allows individuals to view challenges and setbacks as opportunities for growth and learning, rather than threats. By encouraging a growth mindset, children can develop a healthier relationship with their self-concept, be more open to taking risks, and become more resilient in the face of challenges.

**Social and emotional development:** It's essential to provide a supportive and nurturing environment that promotes healthy relationships, self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation.

We use compassionate communication to help children identify and connect to their feelings and hear their deeper needs. We extend empathy to ensure that they know they are heard. This approach in dealing with conflicts avoids shaming, judging, or analyzing the conflict and instead focuses on needs.

We give children the tools they need to compassionately communicate and work out conflicts on their own. If they do need support, we start with forging a human connection between them. We ensure that everyone fully expresses their needs, carefully listens to those needs, and makes reasonable action requests using positive language. We do not hear “no” as a rejection, but rather as an expression of the need that is keeping the person from saying “yes”.

When children's emotional needs are met, it creates a solid foundation for their overall well-being and development. When their needs are adequately addressed and supported, they're better equipped to meet the needs of others.

**Hands-on experiential learning:** Children should not be expected to simply absorb information presented to them, but rather should be encouraged to explore, question, and make mistakes while they learn. People learn most effectively when they can see and touch and do. Presenting and exposing them to new information is important, but combining this with hands-on activities, experiments, and interactive learning experiences makes the learning process more engaging and enjoyable. It also enhances children's overall understanding and application of what they have learned.

**Critical thinking:** In a rapidly changing and complex world, critical thinking enables children to adapt to new situations, and solve problems creatively. It allows them to challenge existing ideas, explore new possibilities, consider different perspectives, and engage in independent and objective reasoning. They can evaluate potential risks and take necessary precautions accordingly. With the right mindset and analytical skills, children can make sound decisions, maximize the use of resources, and increase the likelihood of success.

We give children ample opportunities to critically think through decision-making, hands-on and inquiry-based learning, open-ended questions, and collaborative problem-solving tasks.

**Modeling:** Children are learning how to be a person by watching the kind of people we are. They pay close attention to our actions, words, and interactions. They internalize and mimic the behaviors they observe, forming their own beliefs, values, and social skills based on these experiences. This process of observational learning plays a crucial role in their social, emotional and moral development.

When children witness or are subject to power-based discipline, such as punishments or coercive measures, they may internalize the belief that it is acceptable to exert power and control over others when they encounter difficulties. But if they grow up around understanding, support, constructive problem-solving, respect and compassion, these are the lessons they learn instead.

**Nature:** Many children today are experiencing a nature deficit. With the increasing influence of technology, urbanization, and structured schedules, children are spending less time connecting with the natural world. This deficit can have significant implications for their overall well-being and development.

By nurturing a strong connection to nature, children can develop a sense of awe, appreciation, and respect for it.

Fully immersive outdoor play develops not only the five senses, but provides some natural opportunities for movement, exploration, and discovery. When children are given that freedom, they seem to display an inherent talent to use their imaginations and let the magic of nature happen.

We provide ample opportunities for children to explore the forest and its inhabitants, as well as nature reflection and mindfulness exercises. They build elaborate nests, forts, and designs. They climb trees, explore the creek, brave freezing winters, play with sticks, and find worms, the list goes on and on.

### **Free play**

Children are biologically designed to learn through play. We provide the time, space, and materials with which children can explore, roam, and be. Play supports children's healthy physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. For young people, play allows the inner world to integrate with the outer world. We are especially interested in play that is initiated and led by children and that expresses their own concerns and interests. Such play is full of the stories children create to understand themselves and the world around them.

Play can be an intense learning process. There are rules, there are relationships, there is movement, strategy, and language. Children learn to work well with others and find creative solutions to problems. Some games involve a lot of math, others involve art or building things. Risky play helps children develop social skills, creativity and resilience. They exercise their ability to assess risk levels, and make quick judgements. They learn what's safe and what's not. Children who engage in risky play are more likely to experience positive emotions such as enjoyment, excitement, pride and self-confidence. By allowing children to participate in risky play, we are demonstrating that we trust them and they're capable of problem-solving on their own.

## **Guides**

Guides will act as models, space-holders, and mentors of self-directed learning, and intentional culture creation. Guides will be grounded in the perspective of trusting children, partnership-based relationships, and personal responsibility.

Guides will hold the necessary boundaries to keep the community safe. Sometimes playfulness really helps and sometimes sticking firmly to a strict limit is the only viable choice. But a lot of the time modeling graciousness is just the thing.

A huge part of being a guide is getting to know the children, to learn from them what they need, to provide for those needs, and to help support them be the kind of people that they want any maybe need to be. Guides will help them in setting intentions that will help them embody those understandings, center reflection as self-assessment, and solidifying learning through sharing with others.

Guides will use intentional language with children. There are two things we know about praise: It creates extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivation, and the nature of praise is that it has to increase in intensity over time to satisfy the recipient. Praising effort is better than praising outcome. Instead of general praise (i.e., "Good Job!"), we simply state what we see, i.e. "You tied your shoes all by yourself" or even just "You did it". It tells the child that you noticed. In other cases, a more elaborate description might make sense. If the student draws a picture, we might provide feedback, not judgement, about what we noticed, "This mountain is huge!", and "You sure used a lot of purple today!" If a child does something caring or generous, we might gently draw his attention to the effect of his action on the other person, "Look at Abigail's face! She seems pretty happy now that you gave her some of your snack." This is completely different from praise, where the emphasis is on how *you* feel about her sharing. And even better than descriptions are questions. Why tell him what part of his drawing impressed you when you can ask him what he likes best about it? Asking "What was the hardest part to draw?" or "How did you figure out how to make the feet the right size?" is likely to nourish his interest in drawing.

The attitude of the adults around children makes a huge difference to how they feel about what they do. Guides do not have to be experts at what the children want to learn. Children move on in all kinds of directions that often go well beyond the knowledge, skills and interests of any one teacher, parent, person in these children's lives. That's always been true, but now the internet has made that far easier and even more true than it was in the past.

Guides will have undergone the necessary state-required clearances. They are aligned on Quest's mission/values and committed to collaboratively working through the challenges/shifts that come with walking the path as we are creating it.

All guides/volunteers will receive a training handbook prior to the start of the school year. We will review this handbook with them, and will cover community practices, concerns and conflicts as well as health, safety and behavioral policies. Detailed emergency procedures will also be reviewed. If a training opportunity arises (facilitation, first aid/CPR training), we will ask that guides make themselves available to participate.

## **Staff Communication Policy and Contact Information**

We value and welcome all parent concerns, suggestions, and feedback. However, to respect our staff's personal time, we've established a communication policy. Except for emergencies or urgent matters, we kindly request that you communicate via email and allow 24 hours for a response. If you reach out on a Friday, please expect a reply by Monday.

Melissa Wilkes, Director (609-903-5571) [contact@questmicroschool.org](mailto:contact@questmicroschool.org)

Jessica Jensen, Guide (215-630-8702) [jesscjensen@gmail.com](mailto:jesscjensen@gmail.com)

Kimberly Meloy, Guide (267-221-5062) [kimberly.meloy@gmail.com](mailto:kimberly.meloy@gmail.com)

Renee McDade, Guide (410-336-5629) [reneejmcdade@gmail.com](mailto:reneejmcdade@gmail.com)

## **Volunteers**

Guides and volunteers are what make this community possible. Family members can be involved by hosting a workshop or serving on a committee. We welcome the talents and energy of our families and hope you'll consider offering your time and abilities in some capacity throughout the year.

## **Parent Support**

You know your children best! Information regarding your child's needs, interests, and abilities is collected at the start of the school year. We will make every effort to meet the dynamic needs of students. If you believe your child has needs which require additional preparation, please let us know.

We would also love to hear your ideas on projects, experiences, etc., that you think your child would appreciate. Your support and perspective in this community matters, and we will be reaching out periodically for your input.

On occasion, we will require the support of community members to fill in when a guide calls out or is going to be unavailable for any reason.

## **Location**

We have intentional spaces for indoor and outdoor offerings and free play. Our outdoor space includes playground equipment, gaga ball pits, and over 65 acres of natural space, complete with trails and a creek.

### Address

3405 Davisville Rd,  
Hatboro, PA 19040

## **Trimester Dates**

Quest will operate from Monday through Wednesday from 9:30 AM – 3:00 PM. As a community, we may decide to make minor adjustments to the school year calendar.

Trimester 1:

Sept 4-Nov 26

(Parent check-ins on Nov 27)

Trimester 2:

Dec 2-Feb 27

(Winter break Dec 23-Jan 2, CSF/Quest closed on MLK Day Jan 20, and President's Day Feb 17)

(Parent check-ins on Feb 28)

Trimester 3:

March 10-May 29

(Spring Break March 3-7, CSF/Quest closed on April 17 and 21 and Memorial Day May 26)

## Daily Rhythm

A daily rhythm will typically look like:

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 9:15-9:25 AM     | Drop off                                  |
| 9:30 – 10:00 AM  | Community/Small Group Meetings            |
| 10:00 – 11:45 AM | Morning Offerings                         |
| 12:00 – 12:30 PM | Lunch                                     |
| 12:30 – 1:45 PM  | Outdoor Time                              |
| 1:45 – 2:45 PM   | Afternoon Offering/Self-Directed Pursuits |
| 2:45 – 3:00 PM   | Community Meeting                         |
| 3:00-3:10 PM     | Pick Up                                   |

**Morning Meeting:** We will start our morning with a community meeting to help children and guides ground ourselves into the space and set intentions for the day. This will also be a time for community announcements.

**Morning Offerings:** For our youngest learners, our morning offerings will be Montessori-inspired and learner-driven. We aim to nurture their innate curiosity and passion for learning through exposure to a wide variety of topics such as science, math, language, culture, and art. They are also given the opportunity to pursue work of their own choosing from a variety of Montessori and other educational materials.

Morning offerings are designed to be both educational and interest-driven, covering a broad range of topics like creative writing, art, baking, STEM, and nature. Children will choose their preferred offerings before the start of each trimester and, for planning purposes, are expected to commit to their selected offering for the entire trimester.

**Lunch:** Everyone eats, drinks, and takes care of bodily needs as they wish. We have community mealtime blocked out on the schedule from 12:00 PM – 12:30 PM, as a dedicated time to eat together.

We kindly request that you pack healthy lunches and snacks, if possible. The request for more whole foods and avoidance of highly processed food with artificial ingredients stems from the desire to support the community in the following ways:

- Without the highs and lows of processed sugar and artificial ingredients, we believe the children's bodies will feel better and move easier through their daily rhythm.
- Food dyes (most of which are banned in other countries) have been shown in studies to cause behavioral issues in children.



Please reach out to the Director if you would like some ideas for healthier lunch and snack options.

**Free Time:** This can take many shapes. There could be a project, sports, a game, reading, free play, etc. It could also be that a child leads an offering during this time. It could simply just be a suggestion for play such as lego building or even hide and seek.

**Loose Parts:** A big part of how Quest supports children's free play will be our access to loose parts. The "ScrapShack" is a storage shed housing tools and materials with such things as cardboard, markers, tape, pipes, wheels, bungee cords, old sheets, plastic bottles, milk cartons, and tarps. We invite children to play, create, destruct, work together, work alone, solve problems, and have fun.

### Friday Field Trips/Workshops

We will plan field trips and workshops for those that can make it. Parents must accompany their children on Fridays.

### What Children Should Bring to School

- Backpack
- Food for the day (lunch and snacks)
- Water bottle
- Appropriate clothing for play/engagement and weather. See detailed notes on clothing and gear on page 15.
  - The first day of each trimester, we will ask that families bring in an extra change of clothes for the season to be kept at school (you never know what a day may bring!)
- Optional: Sunscreen/Insect repellent: If you feel your child needs it, please have a layer of this already on students to start the day. We can support students in reapplying if needed or requested.
- Authorized medication
  - Any medications brought to Quest must be declared on a medication authorization form and given to the school director for storage and administration. Authorized medication will be administered to children as directed by caregivers on the medication authorization form. No medication will be administered without prior authorization.

**What not to bring:** Personal items and toys should be left at home or in the car\*. Such items are often lost and present a problem for the children. We know how much children enjoy sharing their prized possessions, which is why there will be show and tells planned in the beginning of every month.

\*The exception would be a show and tell planned for the second week of every month.

### Documentation/Resources

The guides will be observing, making notes, and taking pictures throughout the day to provide parents/caregivers with concrete examples of the learning that is taking place.

We will schedule check-ins with the children to determine if they need more/less/different support to reach goals and follow interests. Guides will also be in communication with parents/caregivers and will decide when they need to be notified about conflicts, trends, habits, etc that might need parent support. And also about their child's needs, accomplishments, goals, etc.

## **Community and Communication**

### Homeschool Life

Homeschool life will be the platform we use to communicate, view the calendar, and sign up for field trips. All families will need to register and pay a \$35 membership fee (deducted from tuition amount). Please let the Director know if you are unable to access Homeschool Life for any reason.

### Community Events

We will hold events throughout the year for community health and bonding. Events will be facilitated by children, parents and/or guides.

### Contacting Quest Families

A member directory is available on homeschool life.

## **Community Practices and Policies**

### **Homeschool or Online Private School**

Quest is classified as a homeschool learning center. Because of this, your child will either have to be registered as a homeschooler or as a member of a cyber school in order to be a part of our learning community.

If you would like to receive more information on homeschooling in PA or cyber schools, please reach out to the Director.

### **Community Practices**

#### **Arrivals and Departures**

Guides will arrive at 9:00 AM to set up for the day. Please ensure that children are dropped off between 9:15 and 9:25 AM. Arriving within this time frame is crucial so that children have time to settle in before the day begins promptly at 9:30 AM. Late arrivals can be highly disruptive to our community meeting, where important topics are discussed, and we don't want your child(ren) to miss out. If you anticipate being late, please contact the Director as soon as possible.

Pickup time will be between 3:00 and 3:10 PM. It's equally as important to arrive within this window, as our guides and volunteers have other commitments and need to leave on time. We expect staff to depart by 3:15 PM, and everyone must be off the property by then. The director at Carson Simpson Farm has emphasized the importance of this, as he does not want families and children on the property without staff supervision. If you anticipate being late, please contact the Director as soon as possible.

## **Parking**

Please park in the small lot next to the administration building.

## **Signing In and Out**

Please remember to sign your children in at drop-off and out at pick-up, and try to keep conversations brief during these times. As you know, the parking lot is limited in space, so we need to keep drop-off and pick-up moving smoothly and efficiently.

## **Birthdays**

With so many dietary preferences (low-sugar, organic, gluten-free, vegan, etc.), we kindly ask that you refrain from sending treats to share on birthdays. We'll celebrate each child's special day with Jessica's Montessori birthday mat if they'd like to participate.

## **School Closings**

We will follow suit if [Upper Moreland Schools](#) close due to weather. All cancellations will be communicated to parents/guardians via text as soon as we determine if school will close or not.

## **Technology, Media and Photography**

- Cell phone use by guides is prohibited during class, with the exception of the following:
  - Taking photos
  - Using Speechnotes for recording observations
  - When vital contact is needed
  - Purposes of educational enrichment
- Quest's computer will be used for research purposes and educational enrichment only.
- Guides/volunteers must carry a cell phone, programmed with contact info of all current parents/guardians, including the Director.
- All class participants must have a signed Media Release Form on file.
- Guides/volunteers are prohibited from using photos from class or mentioning students' names on personal media platforms without prior consent of the Director and parents/guardians.
- Any media use or mention of Quest's name, location, trips, or any other similar material is prohibited without the prior consent of the Director.

## **Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco**

It is expected that you will not have any of these items in your possession while at Quest.

## **Community Concerns, Rules and Conflict Resolution**

### **Community Concerns**

We encourage families to reach out to the Director at any time if they have needs or concerns about a child's time at school. We request that you reach out in the earlier stages of a concern rather than the later stages.

We aim to be the best advocates possible for the children and families. We are all on the same team. Sometimes we need to put all our heads together. For this reason,

we welcome communication and feedback and work to use this information to grow as people, and community builders.

In this same vein, from time to time, we may request family meetings. We will ask for family meetings if we notice a struggle that we think could benefit from parent insight and support. We will aim to call family meetings earlier in the stages of a struggle rather than later. Sometimes the struggle is social, sometimes it's personal, always it's normal.

### **Community Agreements**

There are three general rules in the agreements, which are to respect others, respect our environment and participate, followed by some basic safety rules. Children will enjoy many freedoms as well as take responsibility for their choices, actions, behavior, and education. The daily boundaries and norms of the community are debated and clarified through Change-Up Meetings on an ongoing basis.

### **Behavioral Plans**

When a child is unable to comply with one of the 3 core agreements on a repeated basis, or the child's behavior is causing harm or causing an unsafe environment for others, they may be asked to commit to a behavioral plan (outlined below) to continue enrollment at Quest, with or without some time off from membership to reflect and brainstorm solutions. The goal of these interventions is to teach effective ways in which children can express their feelings, have their needs met, and be heard, while maintaining a safe environment for all.

- Guides will document any incidents that are worrisome or problematic.
- The Director will notify the Parent/Guardian.
- The Director will create an action plan, based on their written documentation, observations, and input from the family.
- A meeting with the parents, staff and the child present to help craft an agreement.
- A follow-up meeting will be scheduled as part of the action plan in order to ensure ongoing observations, evaluation and communication.
- If the family is unable or unwilling to apply the action plan, or the behavioral challenges risk the ongoing safety of other children in the environment, then the family will be asked to withdraw.

### **Conflict Resolution**

#### Peer Conflicts

The environment at Quest will be highly social, thus conflicts can be common. We will ask students to work out conflicts between each other as a commitment to keeping the greater culture healthy. If they want help communicating, we encourage them to ask. They may ask a guide or other students to help mediate difficult conversations.

Guides will often hang back if children are working through a conflict. If they appear to be escalating in conflict, a guide will often step-in to initiate mediation. Guides will use positive reinforcement and validate each child's emotions. We will investigate conflict with the children to understand all perspectives. We see "conflict" as a

normal part of life and help the children navigate it by offering choices and appropriate language.

Living in a small community is no easy task but learning how to care for self and others within a community requires consistency.

### Change-up Meetings

Our change-up meetings will happen regularly. The purpose of change-up is to address issues affecting the larger community. If a particular conflict has a wide-reaching effect, it will likely come up in this meeting. This facilitates the whole community being attuned to the solution.

### Stop Rule

We will ask that all children and guides use the phrase “Stop Rule!” if someone is engaging them in an activity in which they do not want to participate. Stop Rule basically means “Stop it now. I’m serious.” Stop Rule is to be taken very seriously and is a tool for students to practice awareness and consent. If someone is not respecting Stop Rule then students are directed to get a guide to intercede immediately.

### Adult Conflicts

We ask, for the greater health of the adult community, that you seek to find solutions to conflicts between community members.

If you have a conflict or concern with the directors and/or guides, please seek out the director/guide to discuss your concern. We prioritize self-growth and most often, clear communication can be a learning opportunity for all parties. If your concern affects the wider community, the director/guide might request that you bring it a Parent/Guardian Change-up meeting. This allows us to get more heads and voices on the topic and seek solutions together.

### **Incident Report Form**

This is used to inform parents of the details of any physical, emotional, interpersonal, or other interactions that caused a significant disruption in the member’s day. For example, parents would receive a report if a child had an emotional breakdown that got out of control, a large tantrum, a fight with other members, any simmering interpersonal issue that causes disruption in the day.

### **Health and Safety**

All guides will receive a training manual outlining safety and emergency protocols, along with a roster that includes emergency contacts and information for each child. A brief overview has been provided below for your reference.

### Illness Policy

If children or guides are ill, we will ask that they stay home. Use your best judgement when making decisions about when your child should return to school, but have outlined what is typically recommend:

- For general illness and highly contagious illnesses (i.e., strep throat, pink-eye, stomach virus, flu, etc.)
  - They have been fever-free (temperature less than 100 degrees) for 24 hours, without taking fever reducing medication.
- For diarrhea or vomiting

- They have been free of vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours and can tolerate food/ drink without recurrence.
- For skin infection treated with oral antibiotics
  - They have taken the medicine for at least 24 hours.

We will need to send students home if they have a fever of 100+ degrees, have vomited, had diarrhea or any other signs of contagious illness.

### Handwashing

Children and staff are encouraged to wash their hands upon coming in from outdoor play. We will all practice hand washing after bathroom use, coughing, blowing noses, and before eating.

### Ticks

We will perform a tick check at the end of outside time together for the easy-to-see places, but please remember to perform a more thorough tick check at home every day. For more information visit [TickSmart](#).

### School Safety

Providing an environment where everyone feels safe and comfortable will be of the utmost priority. Quest will require certain boundaries to maintain safety for all school community members. Community agreements will be in place, and guides will be given the necessary tools and resources to help them enforce the community safety rules.

Any violent play or media references which disturb others' sense of safety will be discouraged at the guide's discretion. Violent play or languages, slurs, obscenities, or inappropriate references will also be discouraged.

We will not allow children to strike, bite, or kick each other or a guide. Abusive language, humiliation, or intent to scare or frighten is prohibited. A child may be separated from the group if their actions might harm themselves or others. A child will then work with a guide to self-regulate before rejoining the group.

### Outdoor Safety

As guests of CSF, we resolve to treat the grounds with care. Guides/volunteers will encourage children to consider proper boundaries, respect property, and honor their natural surroundings.

Exploring: Children will need to be instructed and reminded to stay within the boundaries set by guides/volunteers at all times. This typically means that children are directly in sight of a guide. However, there might be occasions where a child is behind a tree and out of sight, but within boundaries and within voice range. Guides/volunteers are responsible for ensuring that children do not stray from the group.

Wildlife and Wild Edibles: We will need to teach and remind children to be gentle with living things and to ask a guide before touching any wildlife they find. Children will be instructed to never eat anything from nature without permission from an adult.

Sticks: We know that children will collect, carry, swing, dig, throw, and sword fight with sticks. Just like with throwing, children who wish to swing sticks are directed to find a safe space away from other people. Fantasy play, including sword fighting, is generally acceptable as long as the play does not involve contact and the level of imaginary violence is not distressing to others.

Water: Our explorations may take us to the creek. Children are closely supervised at all times when playing in the water. Because streams may have sharp rocks or other debris, children are required to wear rain boots, water shoes, closed toed sandals, or old sneakers for wading.

Temperature and Extreme Weather: We will be outside in almost all weather! Guides/volunteers will need to be mindful of temperature, precipitation, and wind chill, as well as of the physical and emotional state of the children.

#### Injury/Medical Emergency Protocol

Quest will have first aid supplies sufficient to care for minor injuries. For more serious injuries, the parent/guardian will be notified, and specific instructions regarding actions to be taken will be requested. If further care is needed, we will contact the parent/guardian to come and pick up the child. If there is an event requiring immediate medical attention, guides will call emergency services and contact you. Major injuries will be noted on an Injury Report Form and a copy will be given to the parent/guardian.

## **Clothing and Gear**

(Borrowed from Forest Discovery School)

Children should be dressed in comfortable clothes which allow for ease of movement and which they can take on and off themselves. We will be outdoors in all weather conditions, so children need the appropriate gear.

In this section, we recommend certain brands. Please note that we do not require certain brands, only certain gear. If procuring gear is a specific challenge for you, please contact the Director or your child's guide to discuss options.

### **Basic Clothing Needs**

Children should be dressed in comfortable play clothes, so they can climb and jump and get dirty. They should wear washable clothes which they can handle themselves. Please use elastic waist pants when possible and refrain from allowing your children to wear long skirts as they tend to be unsafe when climbing, jumping, running, etc.

In winter, we highly recommend children wearing synthetic, wool, or silk underlayers. These wick moisture and keep children significantly warmer than cotton.

Please ensure an extra set of base-layer clothing (underwear, shirt, pants, socks) is sent in a labeled bag on the first day to remain at Quest in case it is needed.

### **Backpack**

Children must bring backpacks to Quest each day, packed with lunch/snacks, water bottle, and journal. Since they will be carrying them as we move between spaces, backpacks should not be too large for them to comfortably carry.

### **Shoes**

The type of shoe your child wears is very important. Please use shoes that provide good support. Sandals must have a strap across the back of the foot and a covered toe. Flip-flops are not acceptable for safety reasons. Sneakers or hiking shoes with Velcro closures are great.

When purchasing boots, choose ones that are easy to put on, preferably with pull handles. Go for warm, waterproof, supportive, easy to put on, and not too heavy. Some recommended brands are Bogs, Kamik, Keens, Crocs, Merrell and Lone Cone.

### **Outdoor Gear**

#### Rain Gear

Children and guides learn and play in the rain and there is no option for children to remain inside. If your child arrives without gear, you or your child will need to go home and get it as we cannot have one child remain inside while others play outdoors.

Please be sure your child brings the following on rainy days:

- rain pants, overalls, or waders
- rain jacket with a hood
- rain boots

Some recommended brands: Land's End, Tuffo, Oakiwear, REI, North Face, Columbia, and Polaryn.

#### Winter Gear

Some families choose to get separate snow and rain gear, while others opt to invest in layers.

Please be sure your child brings the following on cold days:

- waterproof pants
- waterproof coat
- a hat that covers their ears
- at least 2 pairs of mittens or gloves (waterproof strongly recommended)
- at least 2 pairs of wool socks
- waterproof boots

#### Snow Gear

Insulated snowsuit, or snow pants and coat. Lands End makes some very good snow gear.

If your child does not have insulated snow gear, they will need

- silk or wool long underwear
- synthetic or wool pants and shirt (soft or stretchy material)
- fleece or sweats (synthetic, NOT cotton)
- thick wool socks