



Elements Nature Program Family Handbook



Welcome new and old friends, we're glad you're here!

-Cristy & Rachel

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***Parent/Guardians reserve the right to review background check, health care, discipline policies and grievance procedures upon request.*

About this Document

The Parent's Handbook describes the general information about our program, and acts as a guide for parents in making various plans for their child's experience and participation in the program. All guidelines should be read carefully and questions should be asked to the Directors for clarification. Parents of enrolled students will be asked to sign at the end of this document, stating that they have read and understand its contents. Click the highlighted link for further details regarding the [MA gov Camp Policies and Procedures](#).



About Elements Nature Program

Elements Nature Program(ENP) is the first program run by Elements Learning Collaborative. ELC was founded in the summer of 2018 by Rachel Medeiros & Cristy O'Brien. ENP welcomes children ages 4-10 to explore the natural environment, learn through play and hands-on activities, and build friendships and healthy relationships with one another. ENP operates on Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays for 10-12 week seasonal sessions. Drop off and pick up times vary for each session (find specific dates below in the Program Calendar). In Spring & Fall, ENP is located at Round The Bend Farm in South Dartmouth, MA, where we spend 80-100% of the day outdoors. In Winter, we reside at Sandywoods Center for The Arts in Tiverton, RI, where we spend 25-50% of the day outdoors. ENP also operates a weekly summer camp at RTB during July & August.



Our Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide children of diverse backgrounds with a holistic, joyful and child-centered learning experience in nature, which fosters social and emotional development as well as responsibility and independence.

Our Philosophy

Elements Nature Program offers a healthy alternative learning option for Southcoast families with the idea that “play is the work of children...” (J. Piaget). We believe that in order for learning to be impactful, it should be applicable, intrinsically motivating, and therefore fun. Our method is a hands-on learning approach providing the right conditions for each child to grow academically, socially, physically and emotionally. This natural, yet innovative and progressive pedagogy allows children to explore and connect with their world in a positive way. Making positive and nurturing connections at the beginning and throughout one's education is important to how one interprets, relates, and reacts to new information. Elements Nature Program offers children the opportunity to make healthy connections to the natural world and our community.

ENP encourages children to explore and discover work, helps develop their independence for

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learning and fosters an environment of respect and socialization. We understand that all children grow individually and at their own pace, and we respect each child as an individual. We help children to reach their individual goals to contribute to their ongoing development and learning.

ENP will utilize nature and our community as the wellspring of resources to create an open-ended, emergent curriculum that allows children to grow into lifelong learners. Based on the seasons, the curriculum will allow for children's interests and multiple intelligences to lead the flow through a holistic learning experience. We believe that a healthy connection to one's community is crucial to guiding children to become positive contributors to society. We model respect for all living things and hope to inspire the children to be stewards of the Earth alongside us.

Homeschool Registration

All children participating in Fall, Winter or Spring programs, ages 6 and older will be registered as homeschoolers by their parents with their respective school districts. Information on when and how to register your child with the school district can be obtained by calling your city or town school dept or visiting their website. We are happy to answer more specific questions and provide further resources on the topic and logistics of homeschooling. Please inquire as needed. Elements is not responsible for corresponding with school systems.

Curriculum

Learning at Elements Nature Program will include, but is not limited to:

- Exploration and stewardship of nature
- Literacy
- Gardening
- Mathematics
- Physical & Human Geography
- Languages
- Science
- Engineering
- Social/Emotional Skills
- Art
- Music
- Movement
- Yoga/Qigong/Meditation
- Farming
- Nutritional cooking & eating

Our curriculum is based on the natural seasons of our climate. We use the natural setting of the farm, fields, and nature trails as our classroom. The children are outdoors in all types of weather, immersed in hands-on learning. The children are reminded to come prepared each day and wear appropriate clothing and sturdy shoes during our outdoor time. We will walk to and from the gardens and the Audubon trail head.

Observation and documentation are key concepts of our method and can be handwritten, recorded, or photographed. Documentation provides a way to look at the development of each child in all domains, as well as creates a window for parents to peer inside the daily life of the program. We also refer to our documentation to plan lessons for each child as well as projects for small groups. We keep a workbook for each child to collect work samples, art, dictated responses, photos, and other

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pertinent information.

Elements Learning Collaborative values family and community participation. At ENP, parents and staff work together in collaboration as a team for each child—to help ensure each child’s progress. Through newsletters, child workbooks, and various opportunities to volunteer, parents and staff can work together creating an environment of growth and compassion.

Students with Learning Differences/Exceptionalities

Elements holistic teaching philosophy and methodology allows for our staff to accommodate most learners. We believe that all education is special education and differentiated instruction is crucial. For children with existing Learning Differences or who have had an IFSP, IEP, 504 in the past, a meeting between the child’s parents/guardians and the Directors of ENP will occur before enrollment to determine if and how the child can succeed in our given environment and what accommodations and/or modifications are necessary. A trial day or week may occur.

Registration Forms & Procedures

In order to participate in ENP, parents must provide the following for their child:

Consent & Waiver Forms

Proof of Recent Physical (within 18mos)

Up to Date Immunization Records OR Exemption Letter

Non-Refundable Tuition Deposit & Acknowledgement of Payment Plan OR Full Payment

Welcome Interview (optional but encouraged)



Tuition Policy

A sliding cost scale allows Elements to be economically accessible. We ask that families choose the highest cost option that you are financially able to. By choosing the highest cost option that you can afford you are choosing to value diversity and redefine wealth. To us, the Elements Team, wealth is the social and emotional wellness of our diverse community, access to nutritious locally grown and processed food, and healthy physical development immersed in a well cared for natural environment. By choosing to enroll your child into an Elements Program and join the Elements Learning community you are making a positive impact on social inclusion in our Southcoast community.

Tuition is due in-full 4 weeks prior to session start. If a payment plan is needed, Elements is happy to collect tuition in installments, with the first installment due 4 weeks prior to the start of the session. All fees and tuition payments are non-refundable. A late fee of \$10 will be applied to any overdue payment.

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Refunds

In the event that Elements is closed due to weather, staff illness, public health or public safety, refunds will not be issued. Participants on payment plans will still be obligated to pay in full, for scheduled time. Elements relies on tuition to remain viable as a non profit organization.

Families experiencing economic hardship may communicate through a letter or email, and will be considered for a partial refund, up to 50% of the amount owed, based on resources available to Elements at the time.

Program Calendar

2020 Fall Elements: 8wks

AM: 9-1pm / Full Day: 9-3pm

First Day - Tuesday September 8th

Last Day / Family Celebration - Thursday October 29th

2021 Winter Elements @ To Be Determined ?wks

Full Day: 9:30-1:30 OR 3pm

First Day - Monday January 11th (tentative)

Last Day - Late March / Early April. To Be Determined

2021 Spring Elements @ RTB: ?wks

AM: 9-1pm / Full Day 9-3pm

First Day - Early April, To Be Determined

Last Day - Late June, To Be Determined

Our Daily Rhythm

**This schedule is subject to change. The most updated Daily Rhythm is in your Welcome Packet sent via email.*

9:00-9:30

Arrival—Parents park in the large gravel parking lot and walk with children to the Tent or Classroom. All parents sign in and confirm who will be picking up. Parents who are volunteering will sign in as volunteers and receive the plans for the day. Parents of hesitant children are welcome to stay until 9:30. Children gear-up and serve themselves snack. **Morning Snack-Must be PEANUT FREE and TREE NUT FREE**

9:30-9:45

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Morning Gathering—We gather under the Tent or in the shade of the cedar tree if needed, sing our morning greeting song and check in with our friends about how they are feeling. A guide introduces the thinking question or topic of study. We discuss the weather and necessary gear.

9:45-10:10

Bathrooms—Guide leads children to the bathrooms in the Kitchen Building. While others are waiting they will listen to a story being read out loud or singing and dancing.

10:10-11:55

Morning Nature Lessons—This time will be dedicated to inquiries of the children and investigations within our seasonal curriculum. Visiting educators from our community may join us to teach various skills (fiber art, yoga, farming, music, etc.) Small group and large group lessons can take the shape of a walk, a game, a story, play, an experiment, a task/chore, life skill activity, etc. in the given outdoor environment. After the nature lesson and before heading back to the Tent area for lunch or departure, the group will spend a quiet “mindful moment” slowing our breathing, resting our bodies, and listening to our surroundings and our own thoughts.

12:00-1:00

Lunch— *Must be PEANUT-FREE* Hand washing & bathroom checks. Children get ready for lunch by setting a table or picnic area and unpacking their food & drinks. (Lunch will continue as long as children need to eat & enjoy their lunch time.) *1 pm Morning half-day children will depart.*

1:00-1:30

Meditation and Relaxation—Guided meditation, yoga, a story or peaceful music.

1:30-2:45

Afternoon Nature Lessons— Children will have the opportunity to lead their own nature exploration & self directed “work.” Teachers will provide lessons based on the children’s recent interest. Small group and large group lessons can take the shape of a walk, a game, a story, play, an experiment, a task/chore, life skill activity, etc. in the given outdoor environment. Visiting educators from our community may join us to teach various skills (fiber art, yoga, farming, music, etc.)

2:45-3:00



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Departure—Farewell Circle & thank you. Children will pack up. Parents will sign-out and depart with their child.

Gear

Students should be prepared with the following gear:

Everyday—full water bottles, **peanut/treenut-free** snacks & a picnic lunch, an extra change of clothes relative to time of year, bug spray preferably with tick repellent.

Summer—waterproof sneakers (no open toed shoes), sunscreen, large brimmed sun hat, sun shirt covering shoulders, towel

Fall/Spring—waterproof hiking boots, sneakers with good traction, or rain/mud boots, waterproof raincoats with hood, rain hat, sun hat

Winter—waterproof snow boots, wool socks, a “turtle” face protector/balaclava, wool hats that cover ears, waterproof snow mittens (no gloves), warm waterproof winter coat with a hood, waterproof snow pants, base layer

Arrival & Departure

At Round The Bend Farm, teachers will greet families at the Elements Nature Program tent or Classroom (given the time of the season). When it is time for the adult dropping the child off to leave, we ask that the adult tell the child they are leaving, and say goodbye. If the child is having difficulty separating, signal a teacher for assistance. Feel free to call us later if your child is upset when you leave, and we will let you know how he or she is doing. We encourage and support the child’s healthy independence throughout the day, as well as during arrival and departure time. Our teachers are here to facilitate and guide our daily routine and gently offer reminders while your child unpacks/packs up and takes outer layers off or puts layers on. We welcome you to remain by the door and allow your child to meet you there fully ready or take your shoes off and gently offer reminders while your child works through the arrival or departure routine.

Elements Nature Program promotes transportation that minimizes negative environmental impacts and reduces emission output. We encourage car-pooling, and ask that you shut off your engines after parking. If you have a sleeping child in the car, please consider opening the windows instead of idling the engine. When you arrive to pick up your child, let us know if you have a sleeping child to get back to, and we will help your child with a smooth and timely departure.

Absence

If you know ahead of time that your child will be missing a day at Elements, please let us know in advance. This allows us to plan accordingly for staffing and daily plans. If you are unexpectedly

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unable to make it to the program, or your child is ill, please let us know ASAP that your child will be absent. It is the parents' responsibility to have the phone numbers of both directors in order to relay messages about absences.

Early Arrival

Please arrive no sooner than five minutes before the start of the program. If you have an extenuating circumstance, and need to drop your child off earlier than that, parents must let us know at least 24 hours in advance so that we can plan accordingly to accommodate an early arrival.

Late Arrival

Please make an effort to drop your child off no later than 15 minutes after the start of the day. This allows your child time to acclimate to the setting before we begin our day. It also allows us to make transitions as a group, as we typically head out to explore at a particular time. If you know ahead of time that your child will be late for a day at Elements, please let us know in advance. This allows us to plan accordingly. If you are unexpectedly going to be late to the program, please let us know ASAP what time we should expect you. On almost all days, we will be exploring the environment away from the drop off area, and will need to know when to expect a late arrival, so we can plan to have a staff member meet your child and get them prepared for the day. It is the parents' responsibility to have the phone numbers of both directors in order to relay messages about late arrivals.

Late Pick-Up Fee

Parents or guardians are to arrive for pick-up no later than 10 minutes after the end of the day (please see Program Calendar or your registration confirmation email for the specific time). If parents arrive more than 10 minutes late, they will be charged a late pick up fee of \$15. For every increment of 5 minutes past the first 10 minutes, an additional fee of \$5 will be charged. For instance; a parent who is 15 minutes late will be charged \$20, 20 minutes late = \$25. Fees will be due on the following day of scheduled programming, or parents may pay a late fee upon picking up their child. If you are running late, please let us know ASAP that you will be late for pick-up and what time you expect to arrive. It is the parents' responsibility to have the phone numbers of both directors in order to relay messages about late pick up.

Behavior Management Policy

Elements Nature Program staff will use appropriate behavioral management techniques including:

- Maintaining proper adult-child ratio
- Redirection
- Positive, descriptive phrase
- Choices

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- Positive reinforcement
- Teaching and Re-teaching appropriate behaviors
- Role-Modeling
- Natural Consequences without shame
- Adult proximity to children with problematic behaviors
- Removal from the group (Child sits out or sent home with continued support from parent(s).)

*When unsafe behavior, including aggression toward oneself, peers, and/or teachers continues throughout a day, week, or repeated over a period of time, and the staff is unable to accommodate the child's needs, it is Elements' policy to have the child picked up by their parents. Sending a child home helps us maintain a safe environment, for all the children attending. The priority must be safety. Often the child who exhibits unsafe behavior is tired, frustrated or needing 1:1 attention. Going home allows the child's parents an opportunity to become immediately involved and work as a team with the teachers to help correct and teach acceptable behavior. Being sent home is not delivered as a punishment to the child, but as a way to help them get their needs met. A meeting with parent(s)/guardian will be arranged to collaboratively problem solve to meet the needs of the child.

Emergency Closings

In the event of a weather, community health or other foreseeable emergency, a Director will text and email parents within 1.5 hours of the start of programming. All efforts will be made to inform parents sooner if possible. For weather related closings, ENP follows the cancellation/early release/late start decisions of the Dartmouth Public Schools, New Bedford Public Schools, Westport Public Schools (and Tiverton Public Schools during winter). If any of these towns cancel school due to weather or other emergency, ENP will cancel as well. It is the parents' responsibility to make sure that the ENP Directors have current phone numbers for each family so we may inform you of this decision.

On-site Emergencies

In the event of an on-site weather, health, safety or other emergency, our emergency procedures will be put into action and parents will be notified by a Director via text, and subsequent phone call if needed. Parents may be required to pick their children up early in the event of an emergency. To see all of ENPs Emergency Policies and Procedures [click here](#).

Illness / Injury

Minor injuries will be treated at school with basic first aid supplies. All ENP Staff carry first-aid kits, as well as consent forms, authorizations, and health records at all times. In emergency situations, such as major injury, or an anaphylactic allergic reaction 911 would be called and a Director would accompany the child in an ambulance to the nearest hospital or hospital of choice as indicated on your child's Emergency Contact Form. Each child is required to have an Emergency

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Contact Form on file with up to date information so we may reach you effectively.

If a child becomes ill while at the program, they will be made to feel comfortable while laying down to rest. A parent will be called to come pick up the child as soon as possible.

When To Keep Your Child Home:

In order to maintain the health of all children and staff at ENP, children must be kept home if they present any of the following. Note the guidelines for how long they must remain symptom-free before returning.

-Fever of 100 F or higher, until fever-free for 24 hours (without fever-reducing medications).

-Vomiting or recurring diarrhea in the past 24 hours.

-Conjunctivitis (pink eye), visually confirmed by parent, they will need to stay home until symptoms have cleared.

-Lice, nits (lice eggs), or scabies, until treated and nit/lice free.

-Body/face rash of contagious or unknown origin.

-Acute cold symptoms or flu-like symptoms until symptoms improve and fever-free for at least 24 hours.

-Chicken Pox, Whooping Cough, Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Scarlet Fever, Hand, Foot & Mouth, Flu. They may return when symptom free for at least 24 hours.

If a child is too sick to explore the outdoors, or participate in group activities, the child should be kept at home. All children who arrive at ENP for the day, are expected to participate in outdoor play and group activities. If your child has had any of the above mentioned symptoms or illnesses, please let us know so that we may inform parents to take precautions, and so we can disinfect the learning space. Your child's health/personal information will remain confidential as we inform parents of their own child's exposure.

Administering Medication

Neither prescribed nor non-prescribed medications shall be administered to a child without written parental authorization. These written instructions shall include the name of the medication, circumstances under which it may be administered, dosage, and frequency of administration. Please request an Authorization to Administer Medication Form as soon as possible if you know your child will need to be administered medication during program hours. If you are able to provide medication before and after program hours, and avoid in-program administration of medication, please do so.

All medications shall be administered by Directors, who are Health Care Supervisors as identified by the Dartmouth Board of Health, and must be in the container from the pharmacy, with the appropriate label on it. ENP will maintain a written record of every medication administered. The parent is also responsible for bringing home medication that is no longer being used.

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Tick Policy

Ticks are small arachnids that feed on the blood of animals. They are most active from early spring through late summer but can be present and biting year-round. Ticks can carry a variety of diseases including Lyme Disease. Ticks can be very small, especially in the larvae and nymph stages, sometimes smaller than a speck of dirt or a poppy seed. According to Dr. Bradford Harding, do everything in your power to avoid a tick bite. When outdoors in tick-infested areas wear long pants and tall socks, tuck pant legs into socks. Use deet-free insect repellent- All Terrain Herbal Armor



Lemon Eucalyptus, and Iguana Oil are all good choices. Scan yourself and others regularly, and check thoroughly at different points throughout the day - before/after bathroom breaks, before/after rest, before dismissal. Showering within 2 hours of being outdoors in tick-infested areas may help remove unattached ticks. Placing worn clothing in dryer on high heat for 10 minutes will kill ticks. If washing clothes is necessary, wash them in hot water (cold & warm water will not kill ticks).

It is advised that parents provide consent for prompt tick removal if an ENP staff member discovers a tick on a child. Transmission time of bacteria and virus from exposure to infection vary. The tick may have not been noted prior to arrival at ENP—thus lengthening the time of possible transmission.

The ENP staff is trained in the best practice of tick removal. If they find a tick they will bring the child to a private spot to explain to the student the need for removal. The staff person will proceed with the 'tick kit' tools to remove the tick in a calm, efficient manner.

In the event of a tick bite, here is what to do:

- Remove tick with pointed (not blunt) tweezers. Grab onto the tick as close to your skin as possible. Tweezers should be on or as close to the ticks head as possible. Pull upwards with a slow, steady motion.
- After the tick is removed, soaked gamma oil onto a tiny piece of cotton and secure it to the location with a bandage or tape. Refresh cotton daily or every 12 hours. Keep gamma oil on for a total of 48 hours.

In addition, it is advised to:

- Take 2 Ledum (homeopathic) pellets 3x/day. Continue for 3 days.
- Take Lymogen 5d (homeopathic) 3x/day. Continue for 3 days.

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- Help to boost the immune system by taking Vitamin C, fermented food, probiotics etc.

Follow-up:

- If you develop a rash or fever within several weeks of removing a tick, see your doctor.
- To minimize the risk of Lyme & Bartonella, take the antibiotic amoxicillin.

The tick will be placed in a plastic bag with an index card noting the child's name, the date, time and location on the body where it was removed. The card will be given to the parent/guardian at pick-up time. Also, if you would like to test the tick before going on antibiotics, UMass Amherst provides this service for a fee. Check out their website for details: <https://www.tickreport.com/>. You can mail in your tick to see if it has any diseases. The complexities of tick testing are well described in this article from the Massachusetts Department of Health and Human Services:

Tick Identification and Testing Services:

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/id/epidemiology/providers/tick/public-health-cdc-tickborne-identification-service.html>

http://www.tickencounter.org/prevention/tick_removal

Snack & Lunch

Nut Free / Peanut Free

Summer Elements is a nut free / peanut free zone. Due to the potential risk of anaphylaxis for some participants, please be sure your child is arriving to camp, with clean hands if they had nuts/peanuts for breakfast. Consider avoiding them at your home on the mornings of camp if possible. There may be other allergens and or sensitivities, therefore we have a strict No Sharing policy at snack and lunchtime. Please be sure you plan accordingly if you have two children in the program, they will not be able to share lunch or snack. Thank you for your understanding in this matter.

During snack, children may have one or two snack items from their lunch box. At lunch, we all sit down as a group and children are encouraged to eat something, but are not forced if they are stating disinterest or appear unwell. Elements we believe in taking care of the natural world, as well as our own bodies. Some of the ways we can do this are by eating a healthy, balanced diet, and reducing both food waste and packaging waste.

Healthy Food

In order to promote healthy eating habits and keep children's immune systems and neurological systems functioning as best they can, **we do not allow juice, candy or dessert** (brownies, cookies, cake, chocolate), for lunch or snack. We encourage parents to vary the foods they send with their children and to include their child in packing the lunch if possible. If your child has disliked

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something in the past, try sending a very small amount of it, they may try freshly cut veggies when they see other children eating them in their lunches, even if they choose not to eat it at home. Our own motto for feeding our kids healthy foods is “you don’t have to eat it, but I’d like you to try a bite and then decide”. We don’t force it after that, but will offer it again in the future. Here are some ideas for healthy snacks & lunches:

Veggie sticks - peppers, carrots, celery

Hummus (find a brand or flavor that they like, or have them help you make it at home)

Toast (with a small container of avocado/guacamole to spread on)

Tomato & cucumber sandwich (cukes + tomatoes are more likely to be eaten when cut thinly)

Meat, cheese & veggie sandwich or wrap (add a bit of raw spinach or thinly sliced cucumber)

Homemade muffins (try a recipe for zucchini or carrot muffins)

Cold salads (bean & broccoli salad, egg salad, pasta salad, potato salad, tuna salad)

Whole fruit - bananas, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, plums, peaches, nectarines, clementines, oranges, apples, etc.

Cut fruit - Mango, pineapple, melon, grapes - (Grapes **must** be cut in half to prevent choking)

Crackers / Pretzels / Corn chips

Plain yogurt (in a resealable container to avoid waste / try with honey, sunflower seeds, berries, etc.)

Hard boiled egg / Olives / Bacon Slices / Cheese Slices

Baked potato fries (make them for dinner, save some for lunch!)

Hot meals for thermos:

Soup (learn your child’s favorites)

Oatmeal (add cinnamon, berries, nuts, raisins, honey or syrup, etc.)

Rice porridge (Cristy often makes “Congee” a traditional Chinese porridge that the children love!)

Rice & beans

Chicken, broccoli, cheese & pasta

Reducing Waste

We strongly encourage families to eliminate or reduce the use of disposable packaging of food brought to school for lunch, snacks, or celebrations. Reusable lunch pouches and food storage containers are preferred over plastic baggies and single serve food containers/bags, such as hummus, yogurt, crackers, fruit cups. **We encouraged families to buy food items like yogurt, hummus, and crackers in bulk, and prepare a child sized portion in a resealable, reusable container.**

Round The Bend Farm has their own zero-waste policy, which we comply with by composting our small amounts of food scraps(peels, pits and other unusable food parts), and sending home plastic wrappers and other garbage, in your child’s lunch box. We will send home unfinished food in your

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child's lunchbox as well, so you may see how much your child is eating, and adjust accordingly.



Elements Nature Program 2020

Family Handbook: Agreement

Thank you for reviewing this document. Your time and assistance are greatly appreciated. Please sign below, acknowledging that you have thoroughly read the Family Handbook and understand and consent to the policies and procedures within. Please let us know if there are any policies or topics you would like us to address.

Thank you!
-Rachel & Cristy

Parent Printed Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Child(ren)'s Name(s): _____

Date: _____

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