

Flatwoods Forest School

Parent Guide



What is Flatwoods Forest School?

We were founded in 2018 with the goal to provide an alternative education program that provides a rich environment for childhood development. We are a parent participatory program that takes place completely outdoors during all seasons - allowing learning and development to occur in a natural environment. We focus on hands-on, experiential, and play-based learning. This means that no two classes are exactly the same. In forest school, children have the opportunity to learn and develop a relationship with the natural world while acquiring important skills for later academic success. Our students grow in confidence, self-esteem and intrinsic motivation all while having fun and engaging with the world around them.

Role of the Educator

Our instructors provide guidance and support and allow children the space, time and opportunity to explore their own interests. Instructors are not there to be the experts but are there to learn alongside students with a strong emphasis on observation. The educator sparks engagement, keeps everyone safe, builds community, and draws out learning – but also knows when to just get out of the way and let it happen!

Role of the Child

While instructors always have a rough plan for the day, we know that children will intuitively lead themselves to the experiences and learning they seek. Each day is different and through their play they are creating deep connections with the natural world and each other, while developing social and physical skills, and inevitably recognizing themselves as an important part of a larger whole.

Core Values:

At Flatwoods Forest School we believe children thrive best in a natural environment with teachers that engage and excite. We facilitate education with values of preservation and mindful discovery, alongside

families that recognize the importance of exploring, caring, and protecting Mother Earth. Because of these core beliefs, we utilize an outdoor environment that is filled with the unique splendor of pine flatwood forests and a living history museum. Our curriculum facilitates a meaningful connection with the natural world that we believe is crucial to a child's development. We also celebrate diversity and inclusion in our program.

Location:

Our Small Group Nature Study meets at a variety of beautiful natural areas throughout Flagler County and the surrounding region, including **Betty Steflik Preserve**, as well as other nature preserves, state parks, county parks, conservation lands, and approved outdoor learning spaces. Each location is thoughtfully selected to provide unique opportunities to explore Florida's diverse ecosystems through hands-on, place-based learning.

Because we believe the best classroom is the natural world, our meeting location may vary depending on the season, weather, and educational focus. Participants will receive the meeting location and any important details prior to each session.

We are untraditional compared to many educational programs—our classroom does not have four walls. Instead, nature is our classroom. Programs are held entirely outdoors, so participants should come prepared for the weather and varying trail conditions.

Dates and Times and Prices:

For Children ages 7-11.

\$60 per session.

Dates/Times/Locations will be updated on the website.

Drop Off:

Please drop off your child no earlier than 5 minutes before class and pick up no later than 5 minutes after class.

Accepting 6 students per class.

Fee Structure:

\$75 per class

Scholarships:

We are a direct provider for the PEP Step Up For Students scholarship and you can find us on their portal.

If you have a financial need we want all children to be able to experience our program, please send us an email to discuss our options if you can not afford our program.

Payment Due Dates:

Payments are due 1 week before the date of the class.

Cash/Checks/ACH Transfer through Brightwheel are accepted forms of payment.

Please make checks payable to Flatwoods Forest School.

We are also a direct provider for the PEP Step Up For Students scholarship. If you want to learn more about this program please visit:

[Personalized Education Program - Step Up For Students](#)

Tuition is the same amount each month or can be paid in full.

Small Group Nature Study Class Rhythm:

10:00am-11:00am: Drop off/Theme of the Day

11:00am- 11:30am Snack/Circle Time/Story

11:30am-1:00pm- Nature Walk

1:00pm-2:00pm- Lunch/Lost Skill Activity of the Day

2:00pm - Pick Up

****These schedules are subject to change depending on group dynamic, weather, projects, and other variables.****

Brightwheel:

We utilize a software called Brightwheel that is a complete childcare management application that integrates automatic billing, payments, real time communication and classroom management. After acceptance into our program you will be sent the registration link through Brightwheel.

Environmental Hazards:

Environmental hazards including mosquitoes, ticks, snakes and poisonous plants have the potential to be a threat to a child's safety. All of our staff are trained on how to identify and treat symptoms resulting from contact with poisonous plants, animal or insect bites. All nature walks will be walked in a "sandwich", 1 instructor in the front and 1 parent in the rear, and regular head counts will take place.

Farm Animal Hazards:

It is our policy that students and their families may not pet and approach the farm animals at the Agricultural Museum. This is for everyone's safety because these animals can bite, kick, and stomp. There will be a few instances when we have arranged programming for the day that may include feeding the animals, and learning about them but these activities will be closely monitored.

Emergency Contact:

In case of emergency, 911 will be called, and the emergency contact indicated on Flatwoods Forest School Registration Form will be contacted in order of contact priority stated by parents/guardians.

Behavior Principles:

Respect all life, respect diversity, respect all people, respect the learning environment, use things with care, enjoy learning, help others learn, be prepared.

Behavior Guidelines:

We are proactive in our behavior management by ensuring a safe space for all children. We respect each child's emotional needs and learning styles. We always use compassionate, respectful language especially when children experience challenging times. We give children the space to express themselves, and if needed we invite them to go to a calm, quiet area so that they can calm down. Teachers will never use their hands on a child in a rough manner and will be patient and nurturing with children

We always consider the specific needs of the child and want to ensure that Flatwoods Forest School is a safe place where children can work through some big feelings if needed. In general, when dealing with unwanted behavior:

1. We focus on the unwanted behavior, not the child
2. Consider the specific needs of the child
3. Offer a safe quiet area to calm down, when appropriate
4. Work together to come up with solutions if needed

Prohibited Behavior:

We do not tolerate any type of physical or verbal abuse in our program. We maintain a safe environment for each child at all times and all instructors, students and parent volunteers are expected to ensure that no harm comes to any child. A child must not be humiliated, (physically or verbally, through sarcasm, taunting, teasing, etc) at any time.

Although we try to allow space for big feelings to be worked out, there are occasions when a child may need to be sent home for the day. In the event that a child needs to be sent home, parents/guardians will be notified immediately and be expected to come and pick up their child. There will not be a refund for that day.

These behaviors include, and are not limited to:

1. Physical or verbal abuse.
2. Significantly impeding on other children's experience or the ability for the program to be successful
3. Disregarding personal safety or putting others in danger;
4. Continued disrespect and failure to follow set limits
5. Running away or needing constant 1:1 supervision

We know that sometimes inappropriate behavior can occur and we are willing to work through this with the help of the parents/guardians. We reserve the right to ask at any time that a student not return, or take a break for a period of time (please see our Refund Policy). Flatwoods Forest School reserves the right to terminate a student's enrollment (with a refund for days not attended) if it is deemed that the program is not a good fit for the child. This is not something we take lightly, and we vow to do our best to not come to this solution.

Inclement Weather:

At Flatwoods Forest School, we continue outdoor programming rain or shine. Nature and outdoor learning opportunities allow children to experience the environment under a variety of conditions. Drizzle or light rain will not hamper most programs. When severe weather such as thunderstorms, windstorms, very hot and very cold weather are in the vicinity, outdoor programs will proceed to indoor facilities. Please ensure your child is prepared for all weather conditions by packing appropriate clothing for them each day. In the event of extreme weather and is too dangerous to proceed (I.E. hurricane, tornado, etc.) we will cancel class as early as possible to give parents enough time to properly plan.

What to bring:

Please send your child with a small backpack they can manage to carry on their own. The backpack should have the following items:

Small hand towel for drying hands from our outdoor hand washing station

Extra set of clothing in case of puddle or pee accidents, including underwear, bottoms, tops, socks - labeled with your child's name

Water bottle

Snack and Lunch with napkin (cloth preferably)

Bug Repellent of parent's choice that has been put on the child before drop off.

Sunscreen of the parent's choice that has been put on the child before drop off.

What to wear:

When your child is spending extended periods of time outdoors, comfort is very important. Good clothing makes the difference between a child who is engaged with the environment and a child who is uncomfortable and unhappy. Please send your child with closed toed shoes. Forest School staff will assess whether children are dressed appropriately when they are dropped off.

When it is rainy, please send your child in layers. We recommend:

- As an inner layer, fleece or natural fabrics such as wool or silk. The fabric should wick moisture away from the skin and provide a warm, breathable layer
- Outer shell of waterproof and windproof clothing, including a rain jacket and rain pants.
- For the feet, we recommend an extra pair of waterproof boots always be packed in the backpack.
- Make sure that your child has a waterproof hat that covers their ears.

When it is cold, please add:

- Warm and waterproof gloves that slip on and off easily.
- An extra pair of warm gloves and warm socks in your child's bag

When it is warm, please wear:

- A light cotton, silk, or bathing suit long-sleeved shirt.
- Durable pants or shorts
- A sun hat
- Running or hiking shoes
- Sun protection

Refund Policy:

Refunds are not guaranteed and are only granted in the case of significant or unforeseen circumstances that prevent a child from participating in the program.

Illness Policy:

Prevention is key and we want to keep our community as healthy as can be, so if a temperature over 100°F; Vomiting; and/or Diarrhea (watery,

profuse stools) occur, we ask that parents/guardians keep their child at home and only allow them back at Forest School at minimum 24 hours after their last symptom has subsided (this is true for staff and volunteers as well).

If a student becomes ill at Flatwoods Forest School, parents/guardians or emergency contacts will be contacted and the student will be asked to be picked up. Students who are affected by communicable disease (measles, mumps, flu, strep throat, viral pneumonia, etc.) must remain away from school until they are no longer contagious. In the case of an outbreak of a communicable disease, parents/guardians will be informed via email.

Absent/Sick Days

If your child is sick, will be absent or late, please let us know asap through Brightwheel.

Food Policy

Students are required to bring their own lunch, snacks and water bottle for each day of programming. We encourage families to consider packing a litter-less lunch that is easy to carry in a backpack. Students may not share food with other students. We are unable to guarantee a fully nut-free environment due to the public nature of the Florida Agricultural Museum, students with any severe allergies should have an EpiPen checked in with the instructor at the beginning of each class.

Child Privacy Policy

All steps will be taken to protect your child's privacy. Any personal data you give to us will be only used for the purpose agreed upon. We will not share your child's health information with third parties, unless legally required to do so. We use the Brightwheel Application for our information database. Upon registration and enrollment, you will be asked to sign a media release consent form. Photos will only be shared once consent has been given and for the purposes agreed upon, such as program promotion (website, Facebook, Instagram, local newspaper, promotional videos and parent updates). Please do not hesitate if you have any questions regarding the privacy of the information you have provided.

Terms and Conditions

In order for your child to participate in Flatwoods Forest School, registration must be completed in full before attending the program. Parents and Guardians must sign the release of liability waiver in order for their children to participate in our program. We are a non-traditional program and are not accredited with the State of Florida. We operate as a program of the Florida Agricultural Museum, a 501(c)3 Not for Profit institution. Parents must acknowledge this to have their child in our program.

TICK FACT SHEET

We want to emphasize to all parents who enroll their child into Flatwoods Forest School that ticks are likely to be encountered throughout the year. If you perform regular tick checks on you child and remove any ticks promptly there is a very low chance of getting any tick-borne diseases. We will do our best to avoid tall grasses and perform visual checks on outer clothing during class, but after each class it is highly recommended to perform a thorough tick check on your child!

If you have any questions about ticks please ask!!

FIELD REFERENCE GUIDE

TICKS

How to protect yourself

Follow these steps to reduce your risk of contracting Lyme disease.

- ▶ Avoid marshy areas, and don't brush up against high grass, and woody shrubs.
- ▶ Wear long pants and tuck them into your socks to prevent ticks from crawling up your legs. Tick researchers wind duct tape around the sock-pant junction to keep ticks out.
- ▶ Wear light-colored clothing so you can spot ticks more easily.
- ▶ Spread insect repellent on your skin or spray the insecticide permethrin on your clothing.
- ▶ At least once a day, check your body. Think small - deer ticks nymphs, which spread Lyme disease far more often than adult deer ticks, are usually about the size of poppy seeds.
- ▶ If you find a tick and suspect it has been attached for at least 36 hours, ask your doctor about taking a single dose of the antibiotic doxycycline as insurance against an infection.

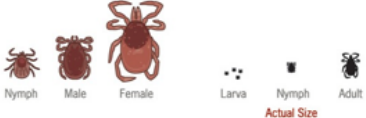
How to remove a tick

Carry fine-tipped tweezers when hiking in high-risk areas. If you find an embedded tick, grasp it near your skin with the tweezers and pull it out in one steady motion without crushing it. Don't worry if mouthparts remain in your skin; once a tick's body is gone, it can no longer transmit

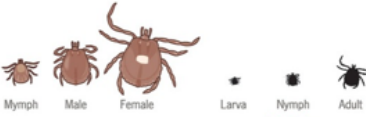


Identification at a Glance

Deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis* and *pacificus*)
Transmits agents of Lyme disease and a parasitic disease called babesiosis.

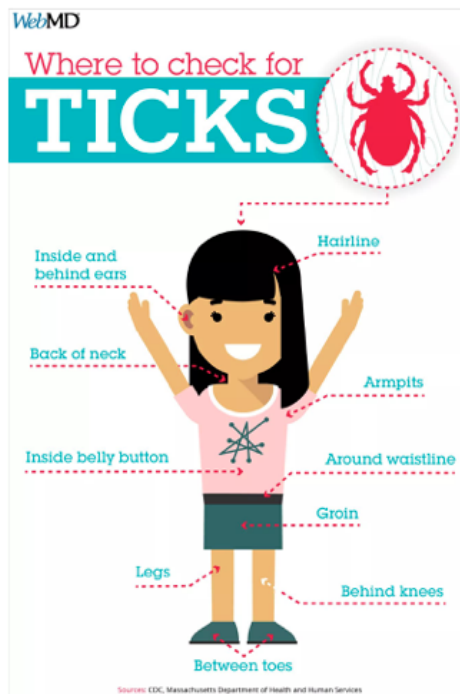


Lone Star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*)
Transmits agents of ehrlichiosis and a Lyme-like condition known by the acronym STARI. Found in the southeastern United States.



American dog tick





Flatwoods Forest School Contact Information:

Email: flatwoodsforestschool@gmail.com

Main phone number- (904) 669-6477

Mailing Address: 170 Pellicer Creek Dr. St. Augustine, Florida 32086

Website: www.flatwoodsforestschool.com

Instagram: @flatwoodsforestschool

Instructors:

Michele Pellicer – (904) 669-6477

Missy Clauson – (610) 730-4381

Please use Brightwheel for all communication with teachers

www.flatwoodsforestschool.com

Follow us on Instagram @flatwoodsforestschool