

ECO – Educating Children Outside

@ The Bethel Campus-WRV School

Welcome Letter and Permission Form

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Your child's class will be using the outdoors as their classroom this year to learn how to care for themselves, others and the environment. We will be spending a few hours every week with the class outside. This time will enrich and support classroom learning and immerse students in the natural world.

Students will explore standards-based themes that will include (depending on the grade level): animal adaptations, life cycles, seasonal changes, rocks and soil, physical geography, mapping, exploring the environment. This content will be presented through skill-based games, observing, journaling, building, drawing, and tracking, and sharing stories. ECO begins for your child's class on

Clothing Inventory (completed by parents)

One focus of our curriculum is teaching children to prepare for being outdoors and to take good care of themselves while they are outside. The following list of clothing is necessary for every student to have. (Warm children are happy children!) **We will go out in the rain so rain boots and rain jackets are very important!** We do have rain pants if you don't have them for your child. Even though the snow is not here yet, we want to make sure each child will have what they need when winter comes!

→**PARENTS: please look over this list and circle the items that you DON'T HAVE** and may need assistance obtaining. Please include sizes with items that you need.

Rainpants (we have these)_____

Raincoat with hood (not lightweight poncho)_____

RainBoots_____

wool/fleece socks (not cotton)_____

heavy fleece/jacket or wool

sweater_____

hat_____

neck warmer or scarf_____

2 pair of gloves_____

long underwear pants _____

long underwear top_____

snow pants or wool pants_____

winter boots_____

winter coat_____

Please read and complete both sides of this form and return it to your child's teacher.

Page 3 is for you to keep at home and reference during the year.

Volunteer Opportunities

Parent/caregiver volunteers are vital to success of ECO. Please come and explore with us! If you can't make it out into the woods, there are other ways to help out too. Below is a list of possible ways that you can be involved. Please check any that you might be interested in.

- ___ Volunteer parent for the day (join the class for a whole day, a part of a day, or even more than one day)
- ___ Guest speaker (a skill to share, games to teach, a story to tell, or local history to pass on)
- ___ Food donations (for seasonal celebrations, special treats, etc.)
- ___ Financial contributions (for warm and dry clothing)
- ___ Clothing donations (work with a few other parents to solicit business donations for clothing purchases)
- ___ Firewood donations (a few bundles of kindling from your home supply would be great!)
- ___ Document the day with video and pictures

If you have further questions about ECO, please contact your child's teacher or myself. We look forward to all the adventures we will have with you and your child this year!

Sincerely,

Melissa Purdy, ECO Coordinator

*****PERMISSION for _____ (print your child's first
and last name)

Please ✓ check to confirm each applicable item and sign below.

___ **Tools** ~ I give permission for my child to use a child-friendly carving tool (called a peeler), a blunt tipped knife, and a child sized bow saw during ECO lessons. The appropriate use of these tools is part of the curriculum. I understand that my child must first pass a tool safety test and will be supervised closely by an adult at all times during use.

___ **Communication** ~ I give permission to the Bethel School to use my child's picture while in ECO on the Bethel Website.

My email address is _____

___ **Media** ~ I give permission for my child's image, voice or written work to be used in materials that include, but may not be limited to, ECO newsletters and grant applications, and digital images. I understand that my child's last name will not be used in conjunction with any video or digital images.

Parent/guardian signature _____ Date: _____

(Please KEEP THIS PAGE at home to help be prepared on ECO days.)

Food

On the day of the program, we require that each student has:

- A hearty snack
- A full water bottle

Being Prepared / Clothing List

- Rain jacket with a hood
- Rain pants
- Long underwear bottoms (moisture wicking is preferred)
- Long underwear top (moisture wicking is preferred)
- Wool sweater or fleece top
- Snow pants
- Snow jacket
- Socks (wool or fleece, no cotton!!)
- Boots (insulated and warm!)
- Hat (wool or fleece)
- Gloves (**please no cotton**) 2 pairs
- Neck warmer or scarf

It's a great idea to send in a plastic shopping bag, labeled with your child's name and filled with a **change of clothes** for them to keep at school to use as needed—mud puddle at recess, rainy ECO lesson, etc.

LAYERING is the key, as we are sometimes very active outdoors and sometimes sitting. Whatever your child is not wearing, they can carry in a backpack. On wet and cold days, pay close attention to the layers close to their skin. If possible, choose a “wicking” material (i.e.; polypropylene or capilene, fleece, or wool), this wicks moisture off of the body, rather than soaking through. Cotton is not the best choice because it will hold moisture close to the body and can make a person chilled. Hats and/or hoods are required on wet and cold days. Again, please contact your teacher if you need assistance acquiring the necessary clothing!



Dressed for Success!

More Information that will help your child enjoy ECO!

Ticks

We will remind students during **every** ECO session to do a tick “sweep”. A tick sweep is a simple body check on the **outside** of our clothes for ticks. Long pants and long sleeve shirts are a good prevention from getting bit by a tick when spending time outdoors in a wooded area.

Ticks are a part of our environment in Vermont. When your children return home from school, regardless of having ECO, families should be checking for ticks.

A student at your school can easily get a tick bite from playing on the playground as they can from walking in the forest. Deer ticks are extremely small and are potential carriers of Lyme disease.

This website is a good resource regarding ticks.

http://healthvermont.gov/prevent/lyme/lyme_disease.aspx

Bug Spray - If you want your child to have bug spray please send it in with a note that they may use it. Students may not use each other's spray.

Severe Weather

Weather and the extended forecast is checked the day before and the day of an ECO outing.

<http://www.weather.gov/btv/>

Severe and unexpected weather may include high winds, thunder and lightning, heavy downpours of rain or rapid drop in temperature. We will not go out in severe weather.

Thank you,

Melissa Purdy, ECO coordinator

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