

Greetings and welcome!

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Bob Etzweiler, and I live in Putney with my wife, Natasha. I am Program Director and Lead Staff for Foxwalk Forest School and also serve as Field Director and Lead Staff for Oyase Community School. I also work at several other schools in the area leading nature connection programs. I love mentoring kids and I'm particularly passionate about tracking, wilderness cooking, fire making, and hide tanning. I'm certified in Wilderness First Aid and CPR, and I'm a Registered Maine Guide.

The purpose of this letter is to provide an orientation to Foxwalk Forest School (FFS) and to pass on some important information about the exciting year ahead.

Foxwalk Forest School has emerged from the interest of local parents in having an outdoor wilderness program for younger children. The name "fox walk" refers to a way to walk or move that is in tune with the rhythms of the natural world. It suggests a relationship with place – a feeling of being at home in the wild. This is my vision for the kids.

Foxwalk is a program about building and fostering relationships, for it is by creating connections to each other and the natural world that our curiosity is stirred and learning flows. Our days will be filled with play, exploration, stories, wilderness skills and fun...lots of fun! We'll be guided by the combined passions of the children and staff, the seasons and weather, and the unique magic that each day has to offer.

The Year's Schedule:

FFS will run from mid-September to late May, with a break during the heart of winter. We begin Tuesday, September 9th and continue through December 16th (please note: we will be OFF November 25th for Thanksgiving break). We pick back up again March 3rd and run through May 26th.

A Day's Schedule:

Drop off will be at 10:00 a.m., pick up at 3:00 p.m.

As kids arrive, we'll typically begin the day with games and nature mysteries. Once everyone's here, we'll circle up and officially begin the day with gratitude. Then it's time to head off into the woods!

Each afternoon we'll come back together in a circle to harvest stories from the day and perhaps hear a story from one of the staff. Typical daily activities will include: a wander in the woods to see what we find and to practice how to not get lost, sit spot time, sensory awareness games and challenges, learning bird language, naturalist journaling and research, skill-building such as fire making, cooking, shelter building, cordage making, plant identification, tracking, and stalking.

Where:

Foxwalk Forest School will be held on John Bert's property at 120 Plowden Rd., Putney, VT. We will meet at the Yurt, where Simon and Dana Renault live. There will be signs directing you there when you arrive on the first day.

What to Bring/Wear:

We'll be outside regardless of the weather (within reason), so seasonal and weather appropriate clothing is a must, especially as temperatures begin to drop.

Synthetics and wool are great options as they help keep kids warm, even when wet. Layering clothing is another good strategy, because wearing several layers helps trap warm air and also makes it easier to regulate warmth. Waterproof boots keep feet dry and warm in wet snow and other wet and damp conditions. In cooler and colder temps, a hat and gloves are a must.

Each child should bring a lunch, snacks and water. All three are essential. Protein rich snacks and lunches will help keep your child warm as it gets colder. Good options include meats, cheeses, nuts and beans. Regardless of the season and temperature, a full water bottle should always be included in your child's daily supplies.

Cancelation Policy:

We'll typically follow the school district's lead with regard to weather related cancelations. If school is canceled, Foxwalk will typically be canceled. If schools are delayed, we'll likely delay as well and may also cancel. If there is a need to cancel Folkwalk when the schools have *not* closed (due to weather, cold temperatures, etc.), each family will be called by 8:00 a.m. While we'll plan to be out in most weather conditions, we definitely don't want people to travel by car when roads are bad.

During program hours, I'll carry my cell phone at all times. With service being a little spotty, texting may be your best option. My cell number is (802) 490-8487. My home number is (802) 387-2708, should you need to get in touch with me at any other time. Please do feel free to call.

I'm absolutely thrilled about the start of this new program and can hardly wait to get started. I look forward to seeing you all on September 9th!

Blessings,

Bob Etzweiler