



ROOTED LYCEUM

Welcome Home

Family Handbook

Firefly Farm & Forest

Welcome Home

Rooted Lyceum is a land-based learning community for children aged three to twelve, located at Firefly Farm & Forest. Our program combines rich academic learning with meaningful experiences in nature, creating an environment where children develop curiosity, confidence, practical skills, and a strong sense of belonging.

The educational approach at Rooted Lyceum has been shaped by a range of respected philosophies, including Reggio Emilia, Forest School, Waldorf education, project-based learning, and contemporary research in child development. Rather than adhering to a single methodology, we have developed an approach that reflects both the realities of life on the land and our understanding of how children learn best. Relationships, purposeful work, thoughtful environments, and sustained inquiry form the foundation of daily life within our community.

Learning is woven into the rhythms of the day. Children care for gardens and animals, build and create, observe seasonal changes, investigate questions that emerge from their own experiences, and contribute meaningfully to the life of the community. These authentic experiences provide context for literacy, mathematics, science, the arts, and social learning, allowing academic knowledge to develop alongside practical capability and emotional maturity.

Our intentionally small group sizes enable educators to know each child well. By understanding each child's interests, strengths, and emerging needs, educators can design experiences that are both appropriately challenging and deeply engaging. The result is a learning environment that recognises childhood as a valuable stage of life while preparing children with the knowledge, habits, and confidence they will carry into the future.

This handbook introduces the philosophy, daily practices, and values that shape Rooted Lyceum. We hope it provides a clear understanding of our approach and offers a glimpse into the community we are privileged to share with the children and families who learn alongside us.

A Different Kind of Childhood

Every family arrives at Rooted Lyceum with their own hopes for their child. Some are looking for more time outdoors. Others are seeking a learning environment that feels more personal, more connected, or more responsive to their child's individual needs. While those journeys differ, they often begin with the same question: What kind of childhood do we want our children to experience?

At Rooted Lyceum, that question shapes every aspect of our community. We believe childhood is not simply preparation for adulthood, but a distinct and valuable stage of life that deserves to be experienced with curiosity, security, and joy. The years of early and middle childhood provide the foundation upon which future learning, relationships, and wellbeing are built, making them worthy of thoughtful protection rather than unnecessary acceleration.

Our approach reflects an understanding that children learn through active participation in the world around them. They develop knowledge by asking questions, testing ideas, building relationships, solving problems, and contributing to the life of their community. Academic learning is an essential part of this process, but it is most meaningful when it is connected to authentic experiences rather than isolated from them.

We also recognise that children do not all follow the same developmental pathway. They bring different strengths, interests, personalities, and ways of understanding the world. A learning community should be flexible enough to honour those differences while maintaining high expectations for growth. Rather than measuring children against one another, we focus on helping each child develop confidence in their own abilities and a genuine enthusiasm for learning.

Relationships are central to this philosophy. Children flourish when they are known well by the adults who care for them and when they feel secure enough to take intellectual, creative, and social risks. They also benefit from belonging to a community where they learn alongside children of different ages, contribute in meaningful ways, and experience both the responsibility of leadership and the humility of learning from others.

The natural world is an equally important teacher. Time spent outdoors offers opportunities for observation, inquiry, physical challenge, and reflection that cannot be replicated in a conventional classroom. As children become familiar with the rhythms of the seasons and the responsibilities of caring for living things, they begin to develop not only knowledge of the environment but also a lasting sense of connection to it.

Ultimately, our vision of childhood extends beyond academic achievement. We hope children leave Rooted Lyceum with strong foundations in literacy, mathematics, scientific thinking, and communication, but we place equal value on qualities that support a meaningful life: curiosity, resilience, empathy, creativity, integrity, and the confidence to engage thoughtfully with an ever-changing world.

These aspirations guide our decisions every day, from the environments we prepare and the experiences we offer to the relationships we cultivate with children and their families. Together, they form the foundation of a learning community where childhood is respected, learning is purposeful, and every child is encouraged to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.

Learning Rooted in Real Life

The educational program at Rooted Lyceum has been shaped by decades of educational research, established teaching philosophies, and our own experience working alongside children. While our approach draws inspiration from Reggio Emilia, Forest School, Waldorf education, project-based learning, and contemporary developmental science, it is not defined by any single philosophy. Instead, these influences have been thoughtfully woven together to create a learning environment that reflects both the needs of children and the unique opportunities provided by Firefly Farm & Forest.

Central to our approach is the understanding that children construct knowledge through experience. Learning becomes more meaningful when new ideas are connected to real situations, genuine questions, and purposeful work. Rather than separating academic subjects into isolated lessons whenever possible, we seek opportunities for literacy, mathematics, science, the arts, and social learning to emerge naturally through investigations, projects, and daily life.

A study of local birds may involve scientific observation, field guides, sketching, descriptive writing, data collection, and mathematical comparisons. Preparing soup from vegetables harvested in the garden introduces measurement, sequencing, nutrition, cooperation, and practical life skills. Designing a shelter in the forest encourages children to apply mathematical thinking, engineering principles, creativity, and collaboration while solving authentic problems together. These experiences are carefully planned to ensure that curiosity is supported by strong educational intention.

Children are active participants in this process. Educators observe closely, listen carefully to children's ideas, and introduce materials, questions, and experiences that extend their thinking. Sometimes learning begins with a child's question; at other times it grows from a seasonal change, a shared project, a story, or an unexpected discovery on the farm. Whatever its starting point, the educator's role is to recognise opportunities for deeper investigation and to guide children toward increasingly sophisticated understanding.

This responsive approach allows learning to remain both rigorous and engaging. Children encounter rich vocabulary, mathematical reasoning, scientific inquiry, historical perspectives, artistic expression, and opportunities for critical thinking throughout the year. Because these concepts are introduced within meaningful contexts, they are more easily understood, remembered, and applied.

Equally important is the pace at which learning unfolds. Children are given time to revisit ideas, refine their thinking, and return to projects over days or even weeks. This sustained engagement encourages persistence, careful observation, and deeper understanding, while also respecting the reality that meaningful learning rarely happens in a single lesson.

Assessment reflects this philosophy. Rather than relying solely on tests or worksheets, educators document children's growth through careful observation, conversations, photographs, work samples, and ongoing reflection. These records provide a comprehensive picture of each child's development and help educators plan experiences that respond to individual strengths, interests, and emerging needs. Families, in turn, gain a deeper understanding of their child's learning than any single grade or score could provide.

Our goal is not simply to help children acquire knowledge, but to help them develop the habits of thoughtful learners. We want children to ask questions with confidence, approach challenges with curiosity, communicate their ideas clearly, and recognise that learning is an ongoing process rather than a destination. These habits prepare children not only for future education, but for lives of continued inquiry, adaptability, and meaningful contribution.

The Rhythm of Our Days

While no two days at Rooted Lyceum are exactly the same, each follows a familiar rhythm that provides children with both security and flexibility. Predictable routines help children feel confident and settled, while open blocks of time allow investigations, projects, and discoveries to unfold naturally. The changing seasons, the needs of the gardens and animals, the interests of the children, and the unexpected opportunities that arise each day all influence how that rhythm takes shape.

Children arrive to a calm and welcoming environment where educators have time to greet each family and ease the transition into the day. These conversations, although often brief, are an important part of building relationships and ensuring that each child begins the day feeling known and supported. As children settle into the community, they reconnect with friends, prepare the learning spaces, and begin noticing what has changed since the previous day.

Community gatherings provide an opportunity to come together before the day unfolds. Depending on the season and the needs of the group, this may include sharing observations from the gardens, discussing ongoing projects, introducing new materials, reading together, singing, or planning the work that lies ahead. These gatherings foster a sense of belonging while helping children understand that they are contributing members of a shared community.

From there, the day expands into longer periods of uninterrupted learning. This extended time is intentional. Children are able to immerse themselves in projects without the constant interruption of bells or frequent transitions. An investigation that begins in the garden may continue into the workshop, the forest, or the art studio as children gather information, test ideas, document observations, and refine their thinking. Educators move alongside them, offering guidance, asking thoughtful questions, and introducing new challenges as learning develops.

Daily life on the farm also provides meaningful responsibilities that become part of the rhythm of the community. Children help care for gardens, tend to animals, prepare learning spaces, gather materials, and contribute to shared tasks appropriate to their age and abilities. These experiences are not viewed as separate from learning; they are an integral part of it. Through purposeful work, children develop practical skills, responsibility, cooperation, and an understanding that every member of a community has something valuable to contribute.

A shared morning snack offers an opportunity to pause, reconnect, and enjoy conversation together. Whenever possible, children participate in preparing, serving, and cleaning up after the meal, reinforcing the sense that caring for one another is a natural part of community life. These everyday moments often become opportunities for rich conversations, storytelling, and the strengthening of friendships.

Time outdoors remains central throughout the day. Children explore the property in every season, observing changes in the landscape, caring for living things, engaging in imaginative play, and pursuing investigations inspired by the natural world. The land provides endless opportunities for movement, creativity, scientific inquiry, and quiet reflection, while encouraging children to develop confidence in their own abilities and a deep appreciation for the environment they inhabit.

Before the day comes to a close, the community gathers once more to reflect on the experiences they have shared. Children may revisit ongoing projects, celebrate discoveries, discuss challenges they encountered, or simply take time to appreciate the work they have accomplished together. Reflection encourages children to recognise their own growth, value the contributions of others, and carry questions forward into the days ahead.

Although the details of each day change with the seasons, the underlying rhythm remains consistent. It provides enough structure for children to feel secure while leaving ample space for curiosity, creativity, and meaningful exploration. Over time, this balance between predictability and possibility helps children develop independence, confidence, and a genuine enjoyment of learning that extends well beyond the boundaries of the school day.

Growing Through Meaningful Work

Children have always learned by participating in the life of their community. Long before education became something that happened primarily in classrooms, children learned by observing, contributing, practising, and gradually taking on greater responsibility. While the world has changed, we believe this remains one of the most meaningful ways for children to learn.

At Rooted Lyceum, children are invited to take part in work that has genuine purpose. They help care for animals, tend gardens, prepare shared spaces, cook, build, create, and contribute to projects that support the life of the community. These experiences are not added to the curriculum as enrichment activities; they are an important part of how learning takes place.

Meaningful work gives children a sense of ownership. When they collect eggs for the day's snack, notice that the garden needs watering, or help prepare materials for younger children, they begin to understand that their actions have value beyond themselves. They are not completing tasks to earn rewards or praise, but because they are contributing to something they care about.

These everyday responsibilities also provide rich opportunities for academic learning. Reading recipes, estimating quantities, recording observations, measuring timber, planning garden beds, and documenting investigations all require children to apply literacy, mathematics, scientific thinking, and problem-solving in authentic contexts. Learning becomes purposeful because it is connected to real experiences rather than abstract exercises.

Equally important are the habits children develop through this work. Responsibility grows through practice. Persistence develops when projects take time to complete. Cooperation becomes necessary when work is shared, and confidence emerges as children recognise their own capability. These qualities cannot be rushed or taught through instruction alone; they develop gradually through repeated opportunities to contribute in meaningful ways.

The work children undertake naturally changes as they grow. Younger children begin by observing, imitating, and participating alongside older peers and educators. As their skills and confidence develop, they assume greater responsibility and often become mentors themselves. This progression creates a community in which children learn not only from adults, but also from one another.

We do not expect children to do every task perfectly, nor do we believe that productivity is the goal. What matters is the experience of participating, persevering, and recognising that their efforts make a genuine difference within the community. In this way, meaningful work becomes far more than a practical activity; it becomes a way of developing capable, thoughtful, and engaged young people.

Where the Land Becomes the Classroom

Firefly Farm & Forest is more than the setting for Rooted Lyceum. The land is an active part of the learning environment, offering experiences that change with the seasons and invite children to observe, investigate, create, and contribute in ways that cannot be replicated indoors.

Our campus has been designed with intention. Gardens, wooded trails, gathering spaces, workshops, animal enclosures, and open areas for exploration each offer different opportunities for learning. Rather than assigning a single purpose to each space, we encourage children to use the environment in ways that reflect their interests, projects, and questions.

The changing seasons continually reshape the learning experience. A garden that provides vegetables in summer becomes a place to study soil, seeds, and preparation in autumn. Winter reveals animal tracks, changing weather patterns, and opportunities for quiet observation, while spring brings renewed growth, insects, nesting birds, and countless questions about the living world. These seasonal changes create a curriculum that is dynamic rather than fixed, encouraging children to develop close relationships with the places they know well.

Time outdoors also provides opportunities for movement, independence, and problem-solving that are difficult to recreate in conventional classrooms. Uneven ground, changing weather, natural materials, and open-ended spaces invite children to assess situations, adapt their thinking, and develop confidence through experience. Whether climbing over fallen logs, constructing shelters, observing wildlife, or navigating woodland trails, children are continually making decisions that strengthen both physical capability and thoughtful judgement.

The natural world encourages careful observation. Children begin to notice subtle changes that often go unseen: the first buds appearing on familiar trees, birds returning in spring, insects emerging after rain, or the gradual transformation of the garden throughout the year. These observations become the starting point for scientific inquiry, artistic expression, writing, mathematical thinking, and conversations that deepen children's understanding of the world around them.

Working on the land also fosters a sense of responsibility. Caring for gardens, animals, tools, and shared spaces teaches children that healthy communities depend upon the contributions of everyone within them. They learn that the environment is not simply something to be explored but something to care for with thoughtfulness and respect.

Although nature plays a central role in our program, spending time outdoors is never viewed as an end in itself. The goal is not simply to ensure that children are outside each day, but to create experiences that enrich learning across every area of development. The land provides context for academic learning, opportunities for meaningful work, and a setting in which children develop resilience, curiosity, and a lasting connection with the natural world.

Over time, children come to know this place intimately. They recognise seasonal rhythms, remember where particular plants emerge each spring, understand the needs of the animals they care for, and develop a sense of belonging that grows through familiarity and shared experience. In doing so, they gain not only knowledge about the natural world but also an appreciation for their place within it.

Relationships at the Centre

The quality of a child's education is shaped not only by what they learn, but also by the relationships that surround their learning. At Rooted Lyceum, strong relationships provide the foundation for everything else. They create the sense of security that allows children to ask questions, take on challenges, express their ideas, and develop confidence over time.

Our intentionally small educator-to-child ratios make these relationships possible. Educators have the time to know each child as an individual, recognising their interests, strengths, emerging abilities, and the ways in which they approach learning. This understanding informs both the experiences we provide and the support we offer, allowing children to be challenged appropriately while feeling genuinely known.

The mixed-age structure of the community also plays an important role. Children spend their days alongside peers who are both younger and older than themselves, creating opportunities for collaboration, leadership, and shared learning. Younger children observe new skills and ideas, while older children deepen their own understanding by explaining, demonstrating, and supporting others. These relationships develop naturally through shared experiences rather than assigned roles.

Educators approach their work as careful observers as well as teachers. By listening closely to children's conversations, documenting their investigations, and reflecting on their progress over time, they gain insight into how each child is thinking and learning. Documentation helps educators plan future experiences, communicate children's growth with families, and ensure that learning remains responsive rather than predetermined.

This process also recognises that learning is rarely linear. Children revisit ideas, return to projects with new understanding, and develop at different rates across different areas. Observation allows educators to respond thoughtfully to those differences without comparing children to one another or expecting them to follow identical pathways.

Relationships extend beyond the learning community itself. We see families as essential partners in a child's education and value the knowledge they bring about their child's interests, experiences, and development. Ongoing communication helps create continuity between home and Rooted Lyceum, allowing children to experience the consistency and trust that support healthy growth.

By placing relationships at the centre of our practice, we create a community in which children feel safe to participate fully, develop meaningful friendships, contribute with confidence, and approach learning with curiosity. These relationships are not separate from education; they are the conditions that allow education to flourish.

Growing Capable, Confident Children

Every child arrives at Rooted Lyceum with their own personality, interests, experiences, and ways of engaging with the world. Some approach new situations with enthusiasm, while others prefer to observe before participating. Some are eager to lead, while others contribute quietly through careful thinking and steady persistence. We see these differences as a natural part of childhood and work to create an environment where every child can develop with confidence.

Confidence is not something that can be given to children through praise alone. It develops gradually as they encounter challenges, solve problems, and recognise that they are capable of doing things they once found difficult. For this reason, children at Rooted Lyceum are encouraged to take on meaningful responsibilities, make decisions, test ideas, and persevere when projects require patience or revision. Educators provide guidance and support throughout this process, but they also recognise the importance of allowing children to experience the satisfaction of solving problems for themselves.

Learning in a natural environment provides countless opportunities for this kind of growth. Children assess how to cross a stream safely, work together to move heavy materials, adapt plans when a structure doesn't hold, or discover that a carefully tended garden requires consistent care over many weeks. These experiences encourage thoughtful decision-making, resilience, and an understanding that mistakes are a valuable part of learning rather than something to avoid.

Because children develop at different rates, we avoid measuring success against a single standard. Growth may be demonstrated through increasing independence, stronger communication, greater persistence, deeper curiosity, or a willingness to attempt something that previously felt difficult. Our role is to recognise these moments, celebrate progress, and continue offering experiences that encourage each child to move forward from where they are.

Living and learning within a mixed-age community also strengthens children's social and emotional development. They experience the responsibility of helping younger children, the humility of learning from older peers, and the cooperation required to contribute to a shared community. These daily interactions encourage empathy, patience, leadership, and respect in ways that are difficult to teach through isolated lessons.

While academic learning remains an important part of every day, we hope children leave Rooted Lyceum with qualities that will continue to serve them throughout their lives. Curiosity encourages them to keep asking questions. Resilience helps them respond to setbacks with determination. Compassion enables them to build healthy relationships, while confidence allows them to approach unfamiliar situations with optimism and a willingness to learn.

These qualities are not taught through a separate character education program. They emerge naturally from the experiences children share, the responsibilities they undertake, and the relationships they build each day. By the time children leave Rooted Lyceum, our hope is that they not only possess a strong academic foundation but also a clear understanding of themselves as capable learners, thoughtful community members, and confident contributors to the world around them.

A Partnership with Families

A child's education is strongest when the important adults in their life work together. At Rooted Lyceum, we see families as partners in the learning journey, recognising that children benefit from consistency, open communication, and shared understanding between home and school.

Families know their children in ways no educator can. They understand their personalities, interests, family traditions, and the experiences that have shaped them long before they arrive at Firefly Farm & Forest. That knowledge is invaluable, and it helps us build relationships that are responsive to each child's individual needs.

In turn, our educators come to know children through their daily experiences within the learning community. We observe how they approach challenges, the questions they ask, the friendships they develop, and the interests that capture their attention over time. By bringing together the perspectives of both home and school, we are able to develop a richer understanding of each child and provide support that is thoughtful, consistent, and individualised.

Communication is an important part of this partnership. Throughout the year, families receive documentation that provides insight into their child's learning, along with regular updates, conversations, and opportunities to connect with educators. Rather than focusing solely on outcomes, we share the process of learning—how children are thinking, collaborating, solving problems, and developing over time.

We also recognise that every family is different. Some are new to alternative education, while others have intentionally sought a learning environment that reflects their values. Some children transition easily into new settings, while others require additional time and reassurance. Our goal is not to expect every family to follow the same path, but to provide guidance, communication, and support throughout the journey.

Families are welcomed as members of the wider Firefly community. Seasonal celebrations, community gatherings, workshops, and shared projects provide opportunities to build relationships beyond the school day and strengthen the connections that make a learning community flourish. These experiences enrich children's education by allowing them to see the adults in their lives working together with mutual respect and a shared commitment to their wellbeing.

Like any meaningful partnership, there will be times when questions arise or challenges need to be addressed. We approach these conversations with openness, professionalism, and the assumption that everyone shares the same goal: supporting the child's growth. Honest communication, thoughtful listening, and mutual respect allow us to work through difficulties in ways that strengthen relationships rather than diminish them.

Rooted Lyceum is more than a place children attend each day. It is a community built on trust, shared values, and meaningful relationships. When families and educators work together, children experience the confidence that comes from knowing they are supported by a community of adults who know them well, care deeply about their development, and are committed to helping them thrive.

Joining Rooted Lyceum

Choosing a school is a significant decision for any family. Beyond educational philosophy and curriculum, it is about finding a community where a child feels secure, understood, and excited to learn. For that reason, we encourage families to take time to explore Rooted Lyceum, ask questions, and experience the environment before making a decision.

The best way to understand our approach is by visiting Firefly Farm & Forest. A walk through the gardens, time spent observing children at work, and conversations with educators provide a far richer understanding than any handbook can offer. Families often tell us that seeing the community in action gives them a clear sense of whether Rooted Lyceum feels like the right fit for their child.

The enrolment process begins with an initial conversation, followed by an opportunity to visit the farm and learn more about the program. These meetings allow families to ask questions about our educational approach, daily routines, and long-term goals while also giving us the opportunity to learn about each child. Understanding a child's interests, personality, previous experiences, and any additional support they may require helps us prepare for a positive beginning.

A thoughtful transition is an important part of joining the community. Starting school is a significant milestone, and children respond to change in different ways. Some quickly embrace new experiences, while others benefit from additional time to become familiar with the environment and the people around them. Wherever possible, transitions are planned with flexibility so that children can begin developing relationships before attending independently.

Before a child's first day, families receive practical information about clothing, daily routines, communication, and health procedures, along with opportunities to ask any remaining questions. Our goal is for children and families to arrive feeling prepared and welcomed rather than overwhelmed by unfamiliar expectations.

As places are intentionally limited to maintain our small learning community, enrolment is based on both availability and the overall needs of the group. This allows us to preserve the close relationships, individual attention, and community culture that define Rooted Lyceum.

Beginning at Rooted Lyceum marks the start of a partnership rather than the completion of an enrolment process. From the first conversation onward, our hope is to establish relationships built on trust, openness, and a shared commitment to supporting each child's growth. These relationships become the foundation for the years of learning ahead.

Practical Information

The routines and expectations at Rooted Lyceum have been developed to support a calm, organised, and welcoming learning environment. While every day is shaped by the interests of the children and the changing seasons, a number of consistent practices help ensure that children feel prepared, comfortable, and ready to participate fully in community life.

Clothing and Outdoor Learning

Children spend a significant portion of each day outdoors in every season. Learning continues in light rain, snow, and changing weather conditions, making appropriate clothing an essential part of daily life rather than an occasional requirement.

Families are asked to provide clothing that allows children to move comfortably, explore confidently, and become involved in gardening, woodworking, painting, climbing, and other hands-on experiences. Waterproof footwear, rain gear, layered clothing, sun protection, and seasonal outerwear help ensure that children remain comfortable throughout the day. Clothing should be practical, durable, and suitable for getting dirty, as evidence of a busy day outdoors is often found on muddy boots, paint-splattered sleeves, and grass-stained knees.

A seasonal clothing guide will be provided to families before each new season begins.

Food and Shared Snack

Each morning includes a shared snack as part of the daily rhythm. Whenever possible, children participate in preparing, serving, and cleaning up together, reinforcing the practical skills and shared responsibility that are woven throughout the program.

Produce grown on the farm is incorporated into meals and cooking experiences whenever seasonal harvests allow. Families are asked to provide information regarding allergies, dietary requirements, and medical needs before their child's first day so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Health and Wellbeing

The wellbeing of children, families, and educators is a shared responsibility. Children who are unwell should remain at home until they have recovered and are able to participate comfortably in the day's activities.

Should a child become unwell during the day, families will be contacted promptly. Information regarding illness procedures, medications, allergies, emergency contacts, and first aid forms part of the enrolment process and is reviewed regularly to ensure children's needs are well supported.

Communication

Open communication is an important part of the partnership between home and school. Families receive regular updates through learning documentation, newsletters, photographs, and informal conversations with educators at the beginning and end of the day.

Where longer conversations are needed, meetings can be arranged to discuss a child's development, answer questions, or explore ways to provide additional support. We encourage families to communicate openly and to contact us whenever concerns or questions arise.

Attendance

Regular attendance allows children to develop strong relationships, participate in long-term projects, and experience the continuity that supports deep learning. Whenever possible, families are encouraged to notify the school of planned absences or illness so that educators can provide appropriate support and maintain continuity within the learning community.

Safety

Children are encouraged to explore, create, and take on age-appropriate challenges within carefully prepared environments. Educators continually assess activities and learning spaces to ensure that risks remain appropriate to children's developmental abilities while removing unnecessary hazards. This balanced approach allows children to develop confidence, sound judgement, and practical skills within a safe and well-supervised environment.

The safety of every child remains our highest priority.

Investment

Choosing a school is an investment in far more than a child's academic education. It is an investment in the environment they experience each day, the relationships that shape their confidence, and the opportunities they have to discover their own interests and capabilities.

At Rooted Lyceum, tuition supports an intentionally small learning community where children are known well by their educators and have daily access to rich, carefully prepared learning environments. It also sustains the resources that make a land-based education possible, including gardens, workshops, animals, outdoor classrooms, natural materials, and the ongoing care of Firefly Farm & Forest.

Tuition includes:

A full educational program for children aged 3–12.

Daily access to our farm and forest learning environments.

Individualised learning experiences guided by qualified educators.

Learning materials and project resources.

Documentation of each child's learning and development.

Seasonal celebrations and community events.

Opportunities to care for gardens, animals, and the wider learning environment.

2026–2027 Tuition

Program Monthly Tuition

One Day per Week \$325/month

Two Days per Week \$575/month

Three Days per Week \$850/month

Enrollment Deposit

A \$300 non-refundable enrollment deposit is required to confirm your child's enrollment. The deposit is applied to the final month of tuition.

Payment Options

Families may choose one of the following payment schedules:

10 monthly payments (September–June)

12 monthly payments (August–July)

Annual payment in full at a discounted rate

We understand that choosing an independent school represents a significant financial commitment for many families. Our goal is to ensure that every aspect of the program reflects the value of that investment through exceptional relationships, thoughtful educational practice, and an environment that supports children's learning and wellbeing every day.

Additional information regarding payment schedules, enrollment deposits, and available payment plans is available upon request.

Frequently Asked Questions

What ages does Rooted Lyceum serve?

Rooted Lyceum welcomes children from three to twelve years of age. Children learn within mixed-age groups, allowing relationships, collaboration, and leadership to develop naturally across the community.

Is Rooted Lyceum a licensed or accredited school?

Rooted Lyceum is a registered and fully insured outdoor learning community operating at Firefly Farm & Forest in Burlington, Ontario.

Our program is led by educators with formal training across a variety of educational settings and many years of experience working with children. Our educational approach is informed by established research in child development and draws inspiration from Reggio Emilia, Forest School, Waldorf education, project-based learning, and other evidence-informed educational practices.

Rather than following a single educational model, Rooted Lyceum has developed its own approach to learning—one that integrates literacy, mathematics, science, the arts, and practical life through meaningful, hands-on experiences in a land-based environment.

Families choose Rooted Lyceum because they value a thoughtful, relationship-based education that combines high educational standards with the freedom, responsibility, and connection to nature that define childhood at Firefly Farm & Forest.

Please note: Families are responsible for ensuring they meet any applicable educational requirements under Ontario law. We are happy to discuss how Rooted Lyceum may complement your family's educational journey.

How much time is spent outdoors?

Children spend time outdoors every day throughout the year. The length and nature of outdoor experiences vary according to weather conditions, seasonal projects, and the needs of the children, but the natural environment remains an integral part of the daily program.

What curriculum do you follow?

Our program is informed by provincial learning outcomes while drawing upon principles from Reggio Emilia, Forest School, Waldorf education, project-based learning, and current research in child development. Academic learning is integrated into meaningful experiences that reflect children's interests, developmental readiness, and the changing rhythms of life on the farm.

How do you support children with different learning needs?

Every child develops differently. Through careful observation, ongoing documentation, and close collaboration with families, educators adapt learning experiences to support each child's strengths, interests, and areas of growth. When additional support is required, we work alongside families to determine the most appropriate approach.

What should children wear?

Children should arrive dressed for outdoor learning in all seasons. Clothing should be practical, comfortable, and suitable for active play, gardening, creative work, and changing weather conditions. A detailed seasonal clothing guide is provided to all enrolled families.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if my child has never attended a nature-based program?

Many children join Rooted Lyceum without previous experience in outdoor or alternative education. Our transition process allows children to become familiar with the environment gradually while developing trusting relationships with educators and peers.

Can families visit before enrolling?

Yes. We encourage every family to visit Firefly Farm & Forest, meet our educators, and experience the learning environment before making an enrolment decision. Observing the community in action is often the best way to understand our approach.

A Final Invitation

Every childhood is unique, and every family hopes to find a place where their child will be known, challenged, and encouraged to grow.

Rooted Lyceum was created for families seeking an education that values both academic learning and the wider experiences that shape a meaningful life. Here, children spend their days exploring the natural world, contributing to a caring community, engaging in purposeful work, and developing the knowledge, skills, and character that will support them long after childhood has passed.

Our hope is that children leave Rooted Lyceum with a love of learning, confidence in their own abilities, respect for the natural world, and a deep understanding that they are capable of making meaningful contributions wherever life leads them.

If our vision resonates with your family, we invite you to visit Firefly Farm & Forest, walk the trails, meet our educators, and experience the community for yourself. We would be delighted to welcome you and to share more about the learning journey that begins here.

