

Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute



Palouse Roots Outdoor School Parent Handbook Summer 2021

Welcome to Palouse Roots Outdoor School! We are delighted to welcome you into this adventure. As a place-based educational non-profit we are committed to outdoor nature immersion, interest-led learning, emergent curriculum, and inquiry based teaching. This program is designed to give your child direct experience with nature and engage them in quality outdoor activities which stimulate their innate curiosity about the natural world. We hope this outdoor school will be a place where your child will learn to love learning, to appreciate the natural world around them and especially the place they call home. We hope that your child will gain foundational skills that will prepare them for school and that they will grow socially, emotionally, and physically. We hope they develop skills in building community and problem solving. And we hope to help foster a kindness in your child towards all living things. We are excited to offer outdoor school as a program of the Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute (PCEI) at Paradise Ridge in Moscow. Please read the information below and let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Warmly,
Misha Cleveland
Palouse Roots Director

Palouse Roots Mission Statement

Palouse Roots provides place-based educational programs in an outdoor environment for children residing in the Palouse region to cultivate community, nurture a deep love of the surrounding environment, and develop inner strength and confidence.

"An environment-based education movement--at all levels of education--will help students realize that school isn't supposed to be a polite form of incarceration, but a portal to the wider world."

— Richard Louv, Author of *Last Child in the Woods*; *Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*.

"Perhaps play would be more respected if we called it something like 'self-motivated practice of life skills' but that would remove the lightheartedness from it and thereby reduce its effectiveness. So we are stuck with the paradox. We must accept play's triviality in order to realize its profundity."

— Peter Gray, Author of *Free to Learn*

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Our Vision

We want children to love learning, to know the woods and the fields like they know themselves, to know the richness that comes from a community working together, and to find themselves being called to the outdoors. We want them to be risk managers vs risk avoiders. We want them to trust and love people, not fear them. We want them to trust themselves and respect the world they live in. We will guide them by providing the space and community where they can find beauty, curiosity, affection, and growth in the trees, soil, friends, and birdsong that surround us. While doing this they will build the foundation of learning they need to then excel in school, jobs, and better their world.

Our Teaching Philosophy

Our main goal is to positively connect children with nature and each other and to stimulate their curiosity about the world around them. To this aim we have very little pre-planned curriculum and we replace this with an environment that is ripe for child-led learning. Our days flow organically and we trust that the children's interests will reflect their own developmental level. Teacher's roles are as guides that model curiosity and engagement while being sensitive to each child's wonder.

Is My Child Ready for Palouse Roots?

There are certain skills and competencies that are important to the success of our nature immersion programs that not all children within our accepted age range can be expected to possess. The following abilities are essential to a child being successful in our program.

- Responds when name is called
- Can alert adults when they need to use the restroom
- Can use the restroom independently
- Willing to wear appropriate clothing for varying weather conditions
- Able to communicate needs or issues to adult (cold, discomfort, etc)

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the three roots of PALOUSE ROOTS



Palouse Roots follows the Moscow School District's schedule for closures (with some exceptions for snow days and in school teacher/conference days) from August 30-June 10 in 2021–2022. Classes are held Monday-Friday 8:30-12:30 and 1-4:30pm at the PCEI Nature Center at 1040 Rodeo Dr. in Moscow.

Daily Rhythm

- 8:30 Arrival at parking lot and circle
- 8:45 Hike together to find our home base
- 9:00 Care for our things and get settled in
- 9:15 Child-directed play, hikes, and exploration
- 10:30 Snack
- 11:00 Child-directed play, hikes, and exploration
- 12:00 Talking Circle
- 12:30 Pickup at the Karymor (merry-go-round)

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Arrival/Departure

- Upon arrival your child should be dressed and ready for the day in weather appropriate gear.
- When you arrive each morning, a teacher will greet you at the parking lot and we ask that you leave your child with us there. If your child has a hard time with these transitions you may stay with them as long as needed during the first week of school.
- Before pickup we will inform you of where we will be meeting, likely near the parking lot in the front yard of the main house
- Pick up is at 1:00pm.
- Children will not be released to adults at pick up who have not been designated in writing. Staff may ask for ID from the individual if they are not the usual person to pick your child up.

Parent Visits

We recognize that some children will transition to preschool at different rates than others. During the first week of school, if your child needs some reassurance parents may walk their child to our home base and/or stay with them. Please keep in mind our goal is for your child to be independent in our program and we will work with you to help your child feel safe and secure in your absence. If you are interested in observing on another day during the year, please arrange this in advance with the teachers.

Birthdays

Birthdays are special at Palouse Roots! We love to mark another trip around the sun during our daily circle time and encourage parents to attend their child's birthday celebration. You are also invited to bring pictures of your child when they were younger to share with the class.

Snack

Your child should bring a hearty snack to school each day. Please keep in mind that playing hard outside burns a lot of calories and they may be hungrier than normal. Please be sure to share any allergies your child has on our enrollment forms. Please send your child with a full, leak proof water bottle labeled clearly with their name. On warmer days, your child may need an extra water bottle. No glass please.

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Absences and Late Arrivals

Please let us know if your child will be late or absent that day by texting Misha Cleveland at (814) 933-6731, or Fiona Quigley at (407) 376-1934. If you have anticipated absences or late arrivals please communicate that through email or text as early as possible.

Dress Code

"There's no such thing as bad weather, just inappropriate clothing."

We want your child to thrive at Palouse Roots! Appropriate clothing is critical for their comfort and success at outdoor school, and all clothing is not created equal. Please review the list of required gear below, includes the suggested and approved options and brands. If you have different clothing options you'd like to substitute, please ask Misha to preapprove them-Questions are encouraged! If you need financial support for apparel, please reach out to us and we will do all we can to help get your child the appropriate gear. Approved clothing is a requirement for attendance every day. Unless we have previously communicated with you about it, your child will not be able to stay for school on any day that they arrive in unsuitable clothing.

The following are our general guidelines about clothing:

1. Label all clothing
2. Only provide clothes that can get messy
3. Clothes should allow for free movement
4. Leave an extra set of clothing at school
5. When in doubt about the weather, send your child in layers or with layers in backpack.

The following items are required as a Palouse Roots cold weather uniform. The exact brands are not required, but these are the brands that we have found to be both affordable and high quality.

- Rain Suit. We highly recommend the two piece CeLaVi rain suit. It is inexpensive yet very waterproof and durable. It will last several years and is loose enough to put snow gear on underneath in the winter! Other approved brands for rain gear are Helly Hansen and Oakiwear.
- Waterproof and insulated boots (Bogs, Kamik)

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- Snow pants and Jacket OR snowsuit (REI, Oakiwear, Spyder, Obermeyer)
- Wool socks (Smartwool, REI, Darn Tough)
- Two piece base layer, NOT cotton (REI, Cabelas, Patagonia, Smartwool)
- Waterproof mittens (CeLaVi, Head with side zipper)
- Warm hat

Please reach out to us if you have any questions about our clothing policy.

Extreme Weather Policy

If Palouse Roots will be closed due to extreme weather you will be notified by text message.

Safety and Wellbeing

Your child's well being is very important to us. We maintain a low teacher to student ratio of 6:1 at Palouse Roots. We are committed to inspiring and teaching respect for the earth and its creatures. This includes modeling and fostering respect for self and for others at all times. We encourage cooperation over competition and will not tolerate hitting, grabbing, pushing, name calling, aggressiveness or any other demeaning behavior. If any of these behaviors occur, we will take the opportunity to teach your child appropriate ways to deal with their emotions. We empower children in learning how to work with others while simultaneously enhancing their individuality. We will speak respectfully to your child and model appropriate response to the range of your child's emotions.

If your child is having behavior issues despite working with our teachers, we will take the time to talk with you about the problem and work to find a solution. If a solution cannot be found we will ask that your child wait to enter our program until they have developed the appropriate skills for school.

If your child sustains a minor injury while at the school (e.g., scraped knee), you will receive an Accident/Incident Report outlining the incident and course of action taken by the staff member. Minor wounds, such as cuts, scrapes, or bites, will be washed with liquid soap and cool, running water followed by rinsing. A dry bandage or dressing may be applied as appropriate. You will be contacted immediately if the injury produces any type of swelling, is on the face or head, or needs medical attention.

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If a serious medical emergency occurs, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance, and a staff member will contact you (or a designated emergency contact if you cannot be reached).

COVID-19 Precautions and Mask Policy

We recognize that science demonstrates a significantly lower risk of infection outside and also want students to be free to play and work together closely, without needing to distance them. We feel that the only way we can keep everyone both close and safe is to have clear expectations about mask wearing.

Current PCEI policy indicates that all individuals above 2 years old, regardless of vaccinated status, need to wear a mask when within 6' of others. We are requiring students, teachers, caregivers, and siblings to wear masks whenever within 6' of each other, both inside and outside. Teachers will gently, clearly, and consistently communicate this expectation to students and others. Possibilities for non-masked times include spaced mask breaks and play zones as needed, as well as during snack time. Facial expressions are meaningful and we appreciate their importance-Your feedback about our ideas as well as suggestions for additional mask-free times are welcome!

Additionally, we ask that parents submit a daily form before drop off that includes a Covid symptom checklist, and an exact temperature for each child. A temperature above 100.0 will rule out participation for the day-We are following Moscow School District's Covid precautions from their online handbook ([MSD Covid Plan Link](#)) and will utilize the details within to guide our decisions about anything related to sickness and return to school after sickness.

Sick Policy

In addition to exclusion based on Covid symptoms in the daily checklist form, children will also need to be kept home if they have vomited or had diarrhea within 24 hours, have conjunctivitis (pink eye) or discharge from eyes, skin rash of unknown diagnosis, or nits on hair from head lice. If any symptoms manifest while a child is at school, the parent or guardian will be contacted immediately and the child will be cared for while waiting to be picked up by parent/guardian. Additionally, we are not equipped to administer medications.

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Tuition

Tuition is due monthly, before your child's first class of the month and can be paid by check (made out to PCEI, not Palouse Roots) or via PayPal (<https://pcei.org/palouse-roots/>).

Withdrawal Policy

We ask that you commit to our school for the days you have enrolled for during summer session. If for some reason you must withdraw you must give 30 days notice in writing and you will be required to pay tuition for those 30 days.

Contacts

Communication is important to us. We are happy to set aside time to communicate with you about any issues you or your child may be having while attending this program. Pick up and drop off is a good time for quick check ins about the day, but we ask you to please email us anything that requires more time as well as things like expected absences. If you need to reach us during class or to communicate an absence or late arrival for the day please text the lead teacher. In the event of an emergency you may contact PCEI.

Misha Cleveland

Palouse Roots Director and Lead Teacher

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Cell (814) 933-6731

PCEI Nature Center 208-882-1444


Fiona Quigley

Palouse Roots Assistant Teacher

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